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H O M E.



H O M E. *Chaworth*
A N O V E L.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

by Miss Cullen—

EXPECT NOT A STORY DECK'D IN THE GARB OF
FANCY,—BUT LOOK AT HOME.

VOLUME I.

PRINTED FOR

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CHAPTER I.

"HOW tiresome bad weather is in the country!" said Lady Ornville, one morning, as she sat with her husband and daughter at Ornville Abbey: "I wish this was Sir Jacob Rich's birth-day; 'tis a festival only which can dispel the gloom of such weather. Constantia," continued she, addressing Miss Ornville, who was employed with her needle, "bring the backgammon-table,—I'll try what it can do to relieve a dull hour."

Miss Ornville immediately rose to obey, when Sir John, laying down a book he was reading, said, "Has your mother not a novel

to read, my dear? I should think Mrs. Radcliffe could far more effectually lighten a heavy hour than backgammon."

"True," replied Lady Orville, "if one could always have a novel of Mrs. Radcliffe's at command, it would indeed be an antidote to ennui; but the stuff I have had of late has not been worth reading. I wish Mrs. Inchbald would write another novel. She knows how to touch the heart,—she has the power of giving a charm to the most simple occurrence! The first morning you can take a ride to Ramsgate, Constance, do pick out something tolerable for me at B——'s."

"Might not your daughter, Madam," resumed Sir John, "amuse you very agreeably for a few hours with her harpsichord?"

"I know not how it happens," answered Lady Orville, "that my feelings are never in unison with music in a morning; in the evening it is very agreeable."

"And in the evening," replied Sir John,

“ I should not object to Constantia’s playing with you, but I cannot think of the morning being lost to her in such a manner.”

“ Do you call time lost, when it is passed agreeably ?”

“ Are you certain that it is agreeable to her to pass the morning at play ?”

“ I am certain it is always agreeable to her to oblige me.”

“ You should, therefore, be the more studious of her interest, and satisfaction. You know, Lady Ormville, that I am little disposed to interfere with your arrangements; and were this the first morning you proposed she should spend at backgammon, I should not oppose it; but has she done anything else these two days than play at cribbage with you ?”

“ Well ! and has not the time passed very harmoniously ? and would do so still if you would not interfere.”

"It would pass very harmoniously to me with your dice-box rattling in my ear, and my daughter's situation rankling in my mind."

"Why do you allow yourself to be disturbed about trifles?"

"Is it a trifle to detach her from useful employments, and give her habits of frivolity, and idleness? Was it not by such means that you ruined your sons?"

"Ruined my sons!"

"Yes, ruined them. Have I not a thousand times told you so? One day or other you will be convinced that their conduct has been the natural effect of their education. When did you seek to encourage them in useful pursuits? Has it not been the business of your life to gratify their wishes, and engage them in a routine of frivolous amusements?"

"My sons," said Lady Ornville gravely, "are like other young men; they love the

pleasures natural to their time of life, and their pursuing them ardently, is the unavoidable consequence of their situation; they know you to be rich; and I do not suppose you would wish to be poor merely for the purpose of diminishing the happiness of your family."

" Is happiness only to be found in the gratification of the passions?"

" Their gratification certainly forms a considerable portion of human happiness. For what do the industrious class of mankind labour, but to obtain the means of those enjoyments, which our sons have, without labour, in their power?"

" And the means attained, nothing remains to be done, but to indulge our inclinations: There are no duties to society to fulfil?

" I do not say so; but in what duties are our sons more deficient than other young men in similar circumstances?"

"In many; but you will not see their errors: when affection prompts, we are all too apt to look through a deceitful medium, which conceals, or disguises the failings of those we love. But let me forbear this ungrateful subject;—I shall only observe, that your eldest son would have been a very different character, had he not been bred in affluence, and encouraged in the unbounded indulgence of his passions."

"Hastings has been too much hurried away in the pursuit of pleasure; but he is correcting his errors; he has given up Newmarket."

"He has given it up, I believe, because he can no longer support the expense of it. He may, as he advances in life, vary his pleasures; but it remains to be seen, whether selfish gratification of one kind or other, will not always be his supreme good."

"Your complaints of him, and of me, are always a very painful, and useless source of altercation."

"I confess they are equally painful and improper; since I had not firmness sufficient to oppose your conduct successfully at an earlier period, it is idle to complain of it now."

The conversation was here interrupted by the arrival of Mrs. Almorne, a lady, whose visits were always acceptable at Ornville Abbey, and whose company, at the present moment, was particularly agreeable.

She was welcomed with much pleasure by Sir John and Lady Ornville, who, in her presence, soon forgot the unpleasant alteration in which they had been engaged.

After the first civilities had passed, Lady Ornville inquired to what cause they were indebted for a visit from her, in weather, which she knew would make her come reluctantly abroad, on account of her servants and horses?

"I come," replied Mrs. Almorne, "at the desire of your eldest son, who is to meet

me here; he brings Lord Woodford with him, and I believe they will remain some time."

" You come very opportunely for us all," said Sir John; " this vile weather had given my wife the vapours, which occasioned a fit of spleen in me, that was, I suspect, very near giving Constantia a disgust to matrimony."

" I should be very sorry for that," replied Mrs. Almorne; " for one of my errands here to-day, is to induce her to think of it."

" I do not believe," returned Sir John, " that she has ever thought of it very seriously."

" That has often surprised me," said Lady Ornville, " it is extraordinary that such a girl as she is, should have attained the age of twenty-one, without discovering the least partiality for any of the young men about her."

"I am glad of it," rejoined Sir John; "she will now be more capable of fixing her affections properly; and if we consult our own happiness alone, we can be in no haste to see her married."

"We must consider her interest," said Lady Ornvile: "But pray, Madam, what has led you to think of her marrying? You have excited my curiosity."

"I have no objection," answered Mrs. Almorne, "to gratify it even before Constantia, for she will suspect, though you may not, that Lord Woodford is the occasion of my visit. He has long had an affection for her, which her discouraging manner has prevented his declaring to herself; but he has now addressed himself to her brother, who is warmly interested for him, and has requested me to speak to Constantia in his favour. I had no hesitation in promising to do so; for I believe Lord Woodforu to be extremely deserving, and his situation is certainly advantageous."

"Lord Woodford is a young man," said Lady Ornville, "whom it requires very little knowledge of to esteem; and his situation is undoubtedly one of the most flattering that any young woman can desire."

"Nevertheless," said Sir John, "Constantia must be left to act entirely as she thinks right; if she approves of him, I shall resign her with pleasure; for I believe him to be very amiable."

"I know him to be amiable," replied Lady Ornville. "Constantia, fastidious as she is, cannot offer a rational objection to him; yet you said something, Madam, of her having discouraged him: Is it so, Constantia? Have you any dislike to Lord Woodford?"

"None," answered Miss Ornville.

"Do you know any thing to his disadvantage?"

"Nothing."

"Then, why discourage him? But perhaps he is mistaken: he is a lover, and may be diffident."

"Let us leave him to find out the mistake if it be one," said Sir John; "'tis sufficient for us to let Constantia know, that we shall be pleased, whichever way she determines."

"I cannot, by any means, say so," answered Lady Ornvile; "I do not wish to constrain her inclination, but I should highly disapprove of her rejecting Woodford."

"If you do not wish to constrain her inclination," replied Sir John, "do not attempt to influence her judgment; the mere expression of your wishes may bias her more than is proper."

"Would you not then," asked Lady Ornvile, "advise your daughter in so important a concern?"

"I should anxiously endeavour to dissuade her from a connection I thought unworthy of

her ; but never will attempt to bias her in favour of any one.”

“ That is very extraordinary,” said Lady Ornvile : “ in my opinion, it is your duty, not only to advise, but to exhort her in point of which her inexperience of life makes it clearly impossible for her to be a competent judge.”

“ Marriage,” replied Sir John, “ is an act of such infinite importance, and, even when formed under the most auspicious circumstances, so precarious in the event, that I should hardly think myself justifiable in urging the marriage of any person whatever ; but women particularly, having more evils to dread in wedlock, and fewer resources against domestic unhappiness than men, should never be impelled to it by the wishes of their friends.— Of all women, my daughter is the last I would advise to marry, lest the force of filial affection, or the weight of parental authority, should influence her conduct too powerfully.”

“ You have very peculiar notions,” said Lady Ornvile : “ I believe there is nothing

more common than the exertion of parental authority in this particular ; parents not only advise, but often compel their daughters to marry against their inclination."

" The parents who do so," replied Sir John, " deserve to forfeit the regard of their family ; I have ever thought such conduct most unjustifiable tyranny."

" Yet," observed Mrs. Almorne, " there are affectionate parents, who, from weakness of mind, or mistaken views, are guilty of such arbitrary conduct.

" There are," returned Sir John ; " and it may happen that a daughter should sacrifice herself to the will of such parents ; but the sacrifice should, even then, be made from gratitude for previous care, and tenderness, not from respect to an authority so unjustly exercised."

" This is most dangerous doctrine," said Lady Ornville ; " it would destroy all regard to parental power."

"It would only limit it," replied Sir John; "and it ought to be limited, especially when a son or daughter ceases to be a minor.—What is the duty of children, Lady Ornvile? Is it blind obedience?"

"Certainly not, but there must always be a high degree of reverence and obedience due to the authors of our being."

"Can it really be pretended," returned Sir John, "that the merely giving birth to a child, lays it under any obligation? Can the parents who desert their offspring, or treat them cruelly, have any claim in reason to their affection or obedience? It is chiefly by the conduct of parents to their children, that they become entitled to their dutiful respect."

"There would be an end of all filial duty," said Lady Ornvile, "were it to be regulated by the opinion children may happen to form of the wisdom or virtue of their parents."

"Yes, if wisdom and virtue were the only

claims parents could have to respect ; but affection and good intentions, must always entitle them to approbation, and in these particulars children can seldom be mistaken. With fallible mortals, indeed, there can be no security from error ; but I am persuaded, that if filial duty were more regulated by the behaviour of parents, a much greater portion of it would appear, than now exists : for their conduct would necessarily improve, and the gratitude of children proportionably increase. Parents are too apt to fancy the natural tie a security for obedience, and a sanction for every impropriety in themselves.”

“ It will require no ordinary degree of wisdom,” said Lady Ornville, “ to hit the behaviour that you would approve ; for you cannot be a greater enemy to tyranny, than you have always been to the indulgence I have shown my family.”

“ It is not by blind indulgence that I should expect to make a favourable impression upon young people ; they will be as apt to despise you for that, as to dislike you for unjust se-

verity. Our conduct to our family has been unfortunately, so different, that we have appeared to run into opposite extremes. The indulgence they met with from you, made them view me as a being who was always at work to counteract their wishes, and rob them of their enjoyments. Hastings, I believe, will always see me in this light ; but Frederick, who is naturally more amiable, and less spoiled by education, feels my conduct now very differently."

"I am persuaded," said Mrs. Almorne, "that Frederick has corrected his youthful errors more from regard to your peace, than from his own sense of their impropriety ; and the respect and affection which he feels for you, will always secure you the most powerful influence over his conduct."

"He is convinced of my anxiety for his welfare, and that my conduct has ever been guided by a sense of what is right, as well as by affection. But I have been led farther than I intended on this subject, which I began merely with the design of encou-

raging Constantia to act as she thinks proper."

"In my opinion," said Lady Orville, "your conversation has been calculated to mislead her extremely; she will fancy that inclination alone ought to guide her in the choice of a husband; and should she be so imprudent as to reject Lord Woodford, you will have much cause for self reproach."

"I think myself perfectly certain, that she will neither reject Woodford from slight causes, nor marry another, without our approbation; but should I be mistaken, I shall still have the consolation of knowing, that I have acted solely from regard to her happiness."

"I trust," said Mrs. Almorne, who was desirous to interrupt the conversation, "that Constantia will ever merit your approbation; and I hope she will soon give me an opportunity of fulfilling my promise to her brother, by representing the merit of Lord Woodford in a just point of view. In the mean time, Madam, will you permit me to try my for-

tune with you at backgammon ? the table is set out, and I fancy I have interrupted the game."

Lady Ornville readily consented ; Sir John resumed his book, and Constantia withdrew to consider at leisure how she should conduct herself towards Lord Woodford. She had no hesitation in resolving to refuse him, but she was anxious to do it in the manner that would be least painful to him, and to her mother ; and prevent, if possible, a contest with her brother, which she had reason to expect.

After much deliberation, she determined to leave to Mrs. Almorne the task of reconciling her mother and brother to her resolution ; from her influence with her family, and affection for herself, she hoped to be extricated from her difficulties, as well as the nature of them would permit.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. ALMORNE was not of the common class of mankind ; nature had been liberal to her of gifts, and had particularly distinguished her by a force of mind, which, uniting with other rare qualities, raised her to a high degree of human excellence. She thought and acted in a manner peculiar to herself ; but though her conduct was singular, and her sentiments often avowedly at variance with common opinions, yet her actions so uniformly tended to the good of society, that she was always respected, and often extremely beloved.

She was a widow of fifty-one years of age, and had been the mother of four children, who died soon after she lost her husband. He had been dead ten years, and had left a landed property of three thousand pounds *per annum*, the third part of which he settled upon her during the life of her children ; but, in the

event of their deaths, she succeeded to the enjoyment of the whole for her life.

She was not supposed to hoard any part of this income, though a very small portion of it was employed in domestic or personal expenses. Her establishment was that of a person of moderate fortune, and she superintended all her affairs herself, and regulated her expenses with the strictest economy ; yet her servants and dependents were treated with much consideration, often with the greatest generosity ; but so perfectly was her liberality to them guided by their merit, that her bounty was often less gratifying as a pecuniary advantage, than as a testimony of approbation.

The strict economy she practised would, in many, have had the appearance of parsimony, but in her it was virtue ; it was justice, considering the means ; it was benevolence, reserving to itself the power of doing good. She was the friend of the good and the unfortunate ; to the poor she was liberal, but her philanthropy was displayed in deeds of a more exalted nature than simple charity ; in

acts of the noblest kind, the effusions of a heart glowing with the love of virtue.

Such was the visitor whom their good fortune brought so opportunely to the relief of Sir John and Lady Ornville.

Mrs. Almorne's husband was first cousin to Sir John, and had always lived with him in the greatest friendship; she entertained for him the same esteem that her husband had done, and was led by her regard for him and his family, to fix her residence at Delvin Lodge in Kent, about five miles from Ornville Abbey; but her principal inducement to this was her attachment to Constantia, the youngest of the family. Miss Ornville was formed to engage the affection of Mrs. Almorne, whom she loved and admired with enthusiasm; while Mrs. Almorne cherished her affection, and watched over her interests with the solicitude of a guardian angel.

Upon Mr. Ornville's requesting her to employ her influence with his sister, in favour of Lord Woodford, she readily consented to

suggest every thing to her consideration that could be fairly urged in his favour ; and she did so the more willingly from the belief that her interference might be useful to Miss Ornville, should she disappoint the wishes of her brother. With this view, she came early to Ornville on the day she had appointed to meet him there, and finding a favourable opportunity of informing Sir John and Lady Ornville, in the presence of Constantia, of the purpose of her visit, she did so, in the hope of hearing Sir John express himself in a manner that might at once encourage his daughter to act as she thought right, and repress the desire of Lady Ornville to support the interest of Lord Woodford too keenly.

Sir John and Lady Ornville married from affection, when he was a younger brother, and a barrister at law. A few years after their marriage, he succeeded to his title and estate, by the death of his only brother, and it then became his wish to reside constantly at Ornville. London he had known chiefly as the scene of his professional labours, which were not agreeable to him ; and as he was

passionately fond of the country, he wished to devote himself entirely to a country life. By him, happiness was only to be found in the peaceful enjoyment of his fire-side, with his family around him ; which, with select society, reading, rural occupations, and the exercise of benevolence, comprehended the whole of his enjoyments.

Unfortunately, Lady Ornvile was very different from her husband. She was the daughter of a younger son of a noble and very ancient family, and, before her marriage, had regularly passed one half of the year in town, and been accustomed to all its amusements. Her disposition was amiable, and she was not deficient in natural parts ; but with a mind uncultivated, and a very gay temper, the power of habit prevailed over the love of domestic comfort, and on her husband's accession of fortune, she was as eager to engage in the gay scenes of London, as he was desirous to remove from them.

For some time they vainly endeavoured to effect a change in each other's sentiments.

She remonstrated against the dulness of the country, and importuned him to carry her to town ; he reasoned against the dissipation of London, and expatiated on the advantages of retirement ; she listened without being convinced, and took the first opportunity to renew her solicitations ; he was too amiable to oppose her strongly, and was sometimes glad to get rid of her importunities by compliance.

Worn out at length by a contest in which they were both sufferers, and thinking it unjust that her inclination should be disregarded in their plan of life, Sir John proposed a compromise. He consented that she should bring as many visitors as she pleased to Ornvile, on condition that she should relinquish entirely her excursions to town, and she gladly acceded to a proposal which promised so agreeable a termination of their disputes. Surrounded by company at Ornvile, she could forget the amusements of the capital ; and that she might have no leisure to remember them, she no sooner found herself the uncontrolled mistress of her house, than she increased her intercourse with her friends, enlarged the circle of

her acquaintance, and did every thing in her power to render Ornvile Abbey an agreeable place of resort. Her endeavours were but too successful, and she soon found herself in a daily concourse of visitors.

This was unforeseen by Sir John, who, in proposing their new mode of life, did not sufficiently consider the situation of his house, and imagined that her visitors would be confined to the circle of country neighbours; but the vicinity of Ornvile to Ramsgate, from which it was only five miles distant, brought numbers to the Abbey, of whom Sir John had entertained no apprehension. Encouraged by Lady Ornvile, many of her town-acquaintances chose Ramsgate for their summer residence, nor was London at such a distance as to prevent their coming at other times to the Abbey, where they were secure of finding an agreeable retreat.

In proportion as Lady Ornvile's happiness increased, Sir John's diminished; for he did not find constant residence in the country a compensation for the loss of domestic quiet, and the presence of people, to most of whom he was at least indifferent.

Lady Orville would willingly have excluded the persons that were disagreeable to him ; but it was not easy to make exceptions where numbers were promiscuously invited, nor could she understand some of the objections he had to her guests. She did not feel that ignorance was tiresome, or folly offensive ; and thought a good-humoured fool could be a very agreeable companion at a card-table.

She was fond of play, without being a gamester ; and Sir John himself highly approved of cards as an occasional recreation ; but he could not, without great concern, see his wife, while a young woman, devote much time to them. He could not, however, persuade her, that she was illaudably employed, when playing a moderate rubber at Whist. When she resided in Lincoln's Inn Fields, she conformed to his wishes, because she was sensible that neither his fortune, nor his professional duties, rendered it proper to entertain much company ; but she did not now think the same restraint necessary : and, as she believed he could spend a great deal of time in any manner he pleased, she thought it more

reasonable that he should sometimes find too much company in his drawing-room, than that she should risk the finding none there at all.

When it was too late, Sir John saw, with deep concern, the effect of his indulgence. Habits once established are not easily broken; it was extremely difficult to turn persons from his house, who were in the daily practice of coming there; and though he could have discarded them, he did not think his peace would be ensured by a measure which would destroy the comfort of his wife. He could not convince her that she acted erroneously; and though he was himself convinced of it, and might therefore have thought it justifiable to exert such authority as would have effected a total change in her conduct; yet, as on the same pretext, every tyrant might justify the most abusive exercise of power, he could not admit the idea of using compulsion, and thought it his duty to surrender his own happiness, in a considerable degree, to hers. Had she been less dependent upon him, he would more strongly have opposed her conduct; but the consciousness that her happiness was wholly in his power, was sufficient with so generous

a spirit as his, to secure his tenderness and indulgence.

Years rolled on without making any change in their situation ; and thus Sir John, though in possession of many of the choicest blessings of life, and exempted from every evil which the world would term a misfortune, had the mortification to find, that a very large portion of his time was spent in a most disagreeable manner.

Such was the effect of dissimilarity of taste in Sir John and Lady Ornville.

Unhappily, they did not coincide more in the management of their children. Ignorance, and love of amusement, rendered Lady Ornville incapable of adopting any useful plans of education. It was sufficient for her comfort if her children were in health, and were near her ; and it was sufficient, in her opinion, for theirs, if they were made happy by the same means that she was. She kept them in her presence as much as it was in her power ; made them, as far as possible, partake of her amusements ; and indulged them in every

gratification to which they showed a propensity.

Sir John saw her errors, and endeavoured to correct them. His understanding, character, and education, led him to form the most rational views for the management of his children ; but in vain he attempted to counteract the effects of Lady Ornville's conduct. In his presence she was obliged to conform to his directions, but in private she acted in opposition to them, and even on some occasions openly persisted in measures he disapproved. This produced frequent altercations between them, which diminished their comfort without benefiting their family : for the inclinations of their sons, coincided with Lady Ornville's, and secretly aided her wishes ; and Sir John, though a stranger to the greater part of her misconduct, yet saw himself obliged to keep his children either constantly from home, or to leave them in some measure under the influence of their mother.

They had three sons, and two daughters. The eldest son, Hastings, was not bred to any profession, and had led so dissipated a life as

to be an old man, in constitution, at thirty-five.

The second son, Frederick, was a partner in a considerable commercial house in London ; he was twenty-six, and had married at twenty, without the knowledge of his family, the daughter of a clergyman, by whom he had two sons. His wife, with her children, was now at Altona, on a visit to her maternal grandfather.

The third son, Philip, had a commission in the Guards.

The eldest daughter, who was twenty-nine, had been married nearly thirteen years to Sir Robert Horndon, a baronet of fortune in the neighbourhood.

Of all the family, Constantia was the most distinguished. She owed much to nature, but she was likewise much indebted to education for the superiority she possessed. At ten years of age, she had been placed under the care of Lady Anson, a sister of her father's, for whom he had a great regard. At that

time Lady Anson had just lost her husband, and having no family except a son, then at the University, she fancied her little niece, of whom she was extremely fond, might beguile her of many heavy hours, and earnestly requested her father and mother to allow her to reside with her. They consented, and in a short time, Constantia became so necessary to the comfort of Lady Anson, that they could not think of depriving her of so great a consolation ; especially as Anson-House, where she resided, was so near Ornvile, that they could have daily opportunities of meeting.

Miss Ornvile continued five years with her aunt, who bestowed such unremitting care on her education, that at fifteen she had made uncommon progress in every female accomplishment; but it was chiefly owing to the attention afterwards paid by Mrs. Almorne to the improvement of her mind, that the superior qualities she possessed, were now appearing in full lustre.

Upon Lady Anson's death, Miss Ornvile returned home, and soon after Mrs. Almorne came to reside at Delvin Lodge. As her chief

inducement to do so, was that she might be with Miss Ornville, she devoted much time to her, and endeavoured to win her affection. Such a character as Mrs. Almorne's could not fail of making a strong impression on a young heart, susceptible of every amiable feeling ; and in a short time her young favourite loved her with filial affection ; listened to her admonitions with reverence ; and regulated her conduct by her instructions and example.

The occupations Mrs. Almorne directed her to pursue, the books she gave her to read, the conversation she held with her, and the admiration her conduct excited, had all so powerful an effect on the mind of Constantia, that she might be said to be always in the presence of Mrs. Almorne, either in reality, or in imagination.

Sir John and Lady Ornville saw with much pleasure, Mrs. Almorne's attachment to their daughter, and the attention she bestowed on her improvement. By Sir John this attention had been earnestly solicited, and Lady Ornville was not insensible of its value. Though she was so very different from Mrs. Almorne,

yet she was so much convinced of her excellence, and found her behaviour always so agreeable, that she would very reluctantly have deprived her of the satisfaction she found in the adoption of her daughter ; and she had been so long accustomed to resign the care of her to Lady Anson, that she could, without difficulty, acquiesce in any measure which Mrs. Almorne thought necessary for her advantage.

CHAPTER III.

LORD WOODFORD and Mr. Ornvile arrived at the Abbey before dinner, and the afternoon passed agreeably to all, except Miss Ornvile.

The next morning as soon as breakfast was over, Mrs. Almorne withdrew with Miss Ornvile to her apartment, where she told her that she wished to take the earliest opportunity of speaking to her of Lord Woodford, but if it would be more agreeable to her to delay the conversation, she would postpone it.

"By no means, Madam," she answered, "the sooner it is over the better."

"Your words, my dear," replied Mrs. Almorne, "and the look which accompanies them, do not augur well for Lord Woodford, of whom I have so good an opinion, that I

should wish you to deliberate well before you reject him."

"Can deliberation be necessary when there is a wish to reject?"

"Certainly: can any subject require it more than marriage?"

"None, when there is any partiality for the lover: but matrimony, under the most favourable circumstances, is so great a risk, that when the heart declares against it, I think it ought not to be thought of further."

"Should the heart alone decide?"

"Only against it, never in its favour: but unfortunately, neither my judgment nor inclination favour Woodford."

"What does your judgment say against him?"

"That he is not the man with whom I could be happy."

"Be more explicit: you cannot suspect

me of intending to urge you to marry, but I wish to know your objections to him; I am persuaded you do not reject such a man without consideration."

"Be assured, my dear Madam, that I have maturely reflected on the subject; for I have long suspected his partiality, and both for his sake and my mother's, I am truly grieved that I cannot see him in a favourable light. I regard and esteem him; I am grateful for his affection, and should be relieved from much distress, if I could conduce to his happiness: but I neither feel for him that affection, which I should wish to have for my husband, nor do I think that he could be an agreeable companion."

"He is very generally liked."

"He has good qualities, and great advantages of situation, which throw a shade over his defects."

"He is not a man of talents, or information, but he has great recommendations."

"What are they?"

"Good sense, good temper, and great worth. I believe him to be absolutely free from any vice or meanness, and his situation——"

"I will never," interrupted Constantia, "marry for situation."

"What will induce you to marry?"

"Affection, esteem, and similarity of mind and character ; without these advantages happiness is not to be expected in the marriage state ; even with them it is very precarious :—one evil may overbalance many comforts."

"May not these ideas be termed romantic?"

"The little experience I have had of life, justifies them. The world thinks my sister in possession of every blessing ; the temper of her husband, in private, makes her wretched. My father and mother must be reckoned among the fortunate class of mankind ; but from you it cannot be concealed, how much their dissimilarity of taste has injured their peace."

"I am afraid, my dear girl, if none should marry till they meet with a connection entirely to their wish, few, very few marriages would be made."

"It is my good fortune to be independent of marriage."

"Are you certain of that? You are, indeed, independent of it at present; but have you considered the consequences of remaining single? You are now encircled by friends, caressed wherever you go, without a care to disturb you; but when time shall have robbed you of your parents;—of the affluence which surrounds you;—of youth and beauty;—you may then, perhaps, be left without occupation, or objects of affection, the prey of melancholy and idleness."

"You draw a terrifying picture."

"Are you prepared for all this? Will you have firmness sufficient to sustain such a reverse of fortune? Nor must you expect, whatever may be your deprivations, the sympathy of others; for there is no situation so little pitied as that of an old maid."

"I know not how far I can promise on my fortitude in adversity, but I may venture to hope, that, if I continue single, it will never be severely tried. As I shall not be exposed to pecuniary distresses, I may contrive occupations for myself, that will prevent idleness, and banish melancholy. I see many single women happy."

"You do: they contrast the evils of the married state with their own, and become contented; besides, they do not all experience the forlorn condition I have alluded to: some of the most respectable and useful members of society I ever knew, were old maids; but this depends on many circumstances, and I should wish to guard you against the worst."

"The worst state I can fancy, is an unhappy marriage."

"True: the misery of it far exceeds what can be felt in a single state; but the advantages which may result from marriage, are also much greater."

"It is my wish to marry."

“ But not Lord Woodford.”

“ Not Lord Woodford. Could I return his affection, I should overcome my other objections to him, since he has the qualities most essential to domestic comfort ; or could he be an agreeable companion, the regard and esteem I have for him are such, as would determine me to sacrifice my own inclination to his happiness and my mother’s ; but Lord Woodford and I are not fit companions. We have been educated in different schools : he could not adopt my views and habits with any satisfaction ; and I could not accommodate myself to his without pain. Under these circumstances I can never think of marrying him ; and as my opinion is decided, I shall be much obliged to you, if you will endeavour to reconcile my mother to it, and persuade Hastings to discourage Woodford’s expectations in the most delicate manner he can.

“ I certainly will, but fear you may have some trouble with your brother. He talked to me of Woodford’s advantages in a way that showed me he would prize him very highly as a brother-in-law ; but, had I not

been convinced that you could not be dazzled by a splendid situation, I should not have consented to speak to you on the subject. Had you favoured Woodford, I should not have regretted it, from the fear that you may encounter greater evils with another, than you could do with him ; but since you are determined against him, I shall own that he is not the man I should choose you to marry ; nor shall I ever wish you to marry any one, but such as you entirely approve. I have urged all I justly could urge in favour of Woodford, that I might faithfully perform my promise to your brother ; and I have represented the disadvantages of a single state, that you might clearly apprehend them ; but I cannot too highly approve of your sentiments, and am only grieved to think how difficult it must be to find the companion you desire."

" Lest I should not meet with him, I shall endeavour to fortify my mind against the disappointment."

" Hard is the lot of women ! They have few avenues to comfort and respectability in life ; and, for a few years only, are some of

these open to them ! But I shall forbear unpleasant reflections : let us return to your family, and depend on my doing every thing in my power to reconcile your mother and brother to your determination."

" If you will permit me, I will continue here ; the presence of Lord Woodford distresses and embarrasses me, between the wish to show him kindness, and the fear of encouraging his affection."

" Remain, then ; and as soon as I have spoken to your mother, I will return."

Mrs. Almorne left Constantia, who, not long after, was summoned to Lady Ornvile's apartment, where she found her alone.

The moment she entered it, she saw so much dissatisfaction in her countenance, that she feared her displeasure was as great as her disappointment.

" Constantia," said her mother, solemnly, as she approached, " come here ;—sit down

by me, and pay attention to what I am going to say. Mrs. Almorne has informed me of your strange resolution to refuse Lord Woodford, which I should not have thought possible, unless you had some partiality for another, but she assures me your affections are disengaged. Are they so?"

" They are, indeed."

" What objection then, can you have to Woodford? Have you considered his merit?

" I have."

" He is certainly one of the best matches in the kingdom; there are very few equal to him; for, with every advantage of situation, he is a perfectly good man."

" I believe him to be so."

" His appearance is also in his favour; he is certainly very handsome."

" He is."

" What objection, then, can you possibly have to him?"

“ Want of affection is the greatest.”

“ That is a difficulty you may soon remove. It is impossible that his amiable character, and affection for you, could fail to make an impression on so tender a disposition as yours, were you to pass some time in his society ; but Hastings tells me, that you have industriously avoided him.”

“ Could I do otherwise, when I imagined he had an affection for me which I could never return ?”

“ That was a very rash conclusion, when you had never given him an opportunity of gaining your affection. I shall never desire you, Constantia, to marry against your inclination ; but I earnestly wish you would try at least to overcome your indifference to Woodford.”

“ I have already tried in vain.”

“ Make another trial. He will probably pass some weeks here ; and, if at the end of that time you should still be averse to him, I shall urge you no farther.”

" My dear mother, were I to pass a single week with him in your presence, I should certainly marry him ; concern for him, and affection for you, would overcome my resolution : I hope, therefore, that either he or I may leave Ornvile in a few days ? "

" This is very strange, Constantia ! What am I to think of such obstinacy ? 'Tis impossible you could talk thus, if you had considered properly the advantages he possesses."

" I have reflected on them all."

" Yet refuse him ! "

" My dear mother, I am happy as I am ; permit me to continue so."

" You should consider, Constantia, how happy your marrying Woodford would make your family. You know it would give your father pleasure ; few things could give me so much ; and it would be attended with the greatest advantages to your brothers. Lord Woodford could easily bring them into parlia-

ment; and Hastings tells me his interest is so great, that he could very soon procure him some lucrative place at the disposal of government."

"Hastings has no occasion for lucrative places."

"You are mistaken; he has been imprudent, and has involved himself in debt.—However, though these things ought to have weight with an affectionate sister, I mention them only as secondary motives; you have much stronger ones,—need I say the making your mother happy should be one?"

Constantia sighed, but did not speak.

"Think again of Woodford's good qualities; his situation,—what a connection he would be for your family."

Still Constantia was silent.

"Of all my family, Constance, you are the one in whom I have most delight. I cannot love you more than I do the rest, but

they do not afford me the same satisfaction. My sons distress me, and the cares of a family have deprived me of Lady Horndon's society; but you are the comfort of my life,—you have never yet occasioned me the smallest regret; will you then destroy this happiness, and show me, that in all my children I must be disappointed? It is now in your power to give me more joy than I may otherwise ever know."

Constantia fell on her mother's neck, and wept bitterly.

Lady Ornville was moved, and tenderly inquired why she was so much affected?

" Because," replied Constantia, " I find it utterly impossible to comply with the wishes of my mother, without the sacrifice of my own peace."

" The sacrifice of your peace, my child! Then Heaven forbid you should make such a sacrifice! I wished you only to endeavour to overcome your indifference to Woodford; but had I fancied he was so disagreeable to you, I should never have troubled you about him."

" He is not disagreeable to me: as a friend I regard, and am anxious for his happiness; but, as the first object of my affection,—as my companion for life, I cannot think of him without affliction."

" Then I shall never desire you to think of him more: however I may lament the disappointment, I can never, knowingly, make my sweet child unhappy."

" Oh! now," cried Constantia, clasping her mother in her arms, " you subdue me,—I cannot resist such kindness—I must, I will endeavour to do as you wish."

" No, my love, you must not; I will never take advantage of your tenderness to render you unhappy: I see, now, it would be cruel to bid you marry Woodford."

This behaviour in Lady Ornvile affected Constantia extremely. She felt, and strongly expressed the various emotions to which it gave rise,—tenderness, gratitude, and deep regret for the disappointment she occasioned her.

Lady Orville intreated her to forget what had passed, and indulge the hope that she might yet marry a man who would be equally agreeable to herself, and to her friends.

"Would to heaven!" exclaimed Constantia, "that your wishes and mine may never again be at variance; for miserable must I be in giving you the smallest pain."

"Think not of me, my dear; I am far more concerned for your brother's disappointment than my own; but I go to seek him, and hope he will not importune you farther."

CHAPTER IV.

CONSTANTIA did not see her brother till they met at dinner, when such strong marks of displeasure appeared in his behaviour to her, as vexed her extremely ; for she knew well, that her mother had been so long accustomed to gratify his wishes, that she could not see him suffer disappointment, without feeling severely.

In the evening, when the rest of the company sat down to cards, Ornvile requested Constantia to accompany him to the library, where, as soon as they were seated, he thus began :—

“ I have been told, Constantia, by your mother, and by Mrs. Almorne, that you are obstinately bent on refusing Lord Woodford. I do not mean to inquire your motives for this, because I am sure you cannot have a

good one; but I wish to represent to you, that in a matter of such importance to your family, it is your duty to consider the opinions of others a little, as well as your own; and that you ought particularly to reflect how much your marrying Woodford would promote the happiness of your mother."

"I cannot think my mother's happiness could be ultimately promoted by a marriage, which was not calculated for mine."

"It is impossible that yours could be hazarded by a union with Woodford, who has every advantage necessary to a woman's comfort: advantages which would be productive of lasting benefit to your family, and give them all inexpressible pleasure."

"I am sincerely sorry to disappoint the wishes of my family; but happily their interest is not so materially concerned as to require so great a sacrifice on my part."

"It would be much easier to show how deeply their interest is concerned, than to explain your thinking it a sacrifice. You cannot certainly expect a more advantageous offer?"

"None equal in rank or fortune."

"But your romantic imagination cannot be satisfied without every possible advantage."

"Far from it; I know they cannot be obtained, and am therefore willing to resign rank, riches, and connexions; I am indifferent likewise about personal appearance."

"Yes,—it is intrinsic merit alone that you prize; your sublime soul is far superior to the ordinary views of mortals!—But really, my dear, it is impossible for me to soar along with you, and I wish you may not some day unexpectedly fall from the clouds, and distress your friends by making some dam—d queer marriage."

"What do you call a queer marriage?"

"Can it require explanation? I should think it very queer were you to marry such a man as—as—Seward, for example; whom I once thought you had a fancy to, from the notice you took of him."

"I took notice of him, because I thought

him a man of uncommon merit, whose modesty exposed him to neglect ; but I took care that he should not misunderstand my attentions."

" Well, I can't accuse you of coquetry, and I dare say you are sensible a poor parson is not a fit connexion for you ; unless, indeed, he had interest sufficient to secure high church preferment ; but were he even an Archbishop, he would be inferior to Woodford, who has more power, and independence, and whose rank and fortune remain with his family, and may be of use to yours for several generations."

" I beg to know who you particularly mean, when you speak of my family ? The benefit to them must certainly be precarious, while the disadvantages to myself may be lasting."

" When I speak of your family, I mean every individual of it, but more especially the person, whoever he happens to be, that is in possession of the family title and estate. It is by him that the dignity of your family must be supported, and such a connexion as Woodford would give it weight and lustre. If the representative of a family is prosperous, its

consequence is preserved, however low the younger branches of it may fall ; they are sometimes, indeed, excrescences which it may be very proper to lop off, but when all the branches of a family flourish, they give mutual aid and consequence to each other. In this view daughters are desirable, as they may form useful connexions. No woman ever had this more in her power than yourself ; for Woodford's influence is great, and he is so amiable, that he will certainly adopt your relations as his own. It will be easy for him to make the fortune of Frederic's sons, and of all Sir Robert Horndon's family ; for even your nieces will marry infinitely better for having such an uncle. Good God ! the views are so great, you cannot hesitate a moment, if you think properly."

" I cannot certainly make the views you speak of my first object in marrying ; but I should be happy if they were compatible with others, which appear to me of more consequence."

" I canuot imagine why your interest, and your family's, should not coalesce on this oc-

casion. Did I propose to you a man, who had only rank and fortune to recommend him, or urge you to marry him when your affections were engaged to another, you might reproach me; but as this is far from being the case, you ought certainly to overcome any objections you can have to him."

"How earnestly do I wish that I could!"

"But you cannot?"

"I cannot."

"Constantia!" cried her brother, raising his voice, "you will forfeit my regard for ever! Your egregious folly should not be submitted to."

"Kindness, Hastings, may do much with me; unkindness can do nothing."

"Tell me, I pray, how I can prevail on you: instruct me but in the way,—you shall find me as pliant as you can wish."

"Gentle measures are certainly the best; but I should only mislead you by inducing you to suppose, that even thus you could alter my resolution: I shall, therefore, be much obliged to you, if you will put an end to Lord Woodford's expectations, as speedily as possible."

"Indeed I shall not ; however regardless of your interest you may be, I have some concern for it. Your resolution may change,—the good qualities of Woodford cannot fail to make an impression upon you in time."

"If he remain here above a day or two, I shall leave Ornvile."

"Then you will eternally disoblige me!—Was there ever such perverseness! Will you not try, at least, to oblige us?"

"Lord Woodford, Hastings, is not an acquaintance of yesterday. I am persuaded that I shall never change my opinion of him ; and, under this impression, it would be cruel to let his affection strengthen."

"There would be no cruelty in it ; his passion for you is probably as strong as it can be, and if it should end in disappointment, he will recover it."

"I have no doubt he will, but it should be my care to make the disappointment as easy to him as possible."

"You will do me a particular favour by permitting him to retain some hope for a

short time ; he is here now by my advice, and I entreat you to show him a little kindness."

"Can you really wish me, by acts of kindness, to endanger still farther his peace?"

"The peace of men is not so easily endangered as you imagine ; they are not composed of such fine materials as Miss Ornville."

"They are capable of affection, and, therefore of suffering from disappointment ; I would rather be ridiculously cautious, than risk giving pain."

"Any girl but yourself would be glad to secure the eclat of such a lover for a while ; have you no pleasure in admiration ?"

"None in the admiration of lovers."

"I thought they were the most agreeable of all admirers."

"To me they are the least so of any. They are often a source of the greatest uneasiness, while they are no test of merit, not even of beauty. Attachments are often formed from such trifling causes, are so easily produced by art, and so seldom arise from taste,

that I could hardly be flattered by the love of any man, however I might be won by it."

"Have you any suspicion, my dear, that you are excessively queer?"

Constantia answered only by a smile.

"You would probably have been an agreeable girl, Constantia, had you never met with Mrs. Almorne; but for her you would have been as eager to become Countess of Woodford, as you now appear averse to it."

"As there was little probability of my having such rank in my power, I am much obliged to Mrs. Almorne for having made me independent of it."

"We shall not discuss the subject at present. Tell me if you will consent to behave civilly at least to Woodford for a few weeks?"

Constantia threw down her eyes without speaking.

"I see," said Ornville, "that you have no inclination to oblige me."

"You are mistaken,—greatly mistaken."

"Yet you will not grant me a trifling favour."

"Did my inclination alone oppose your request, I should not hesitate a moment to comply with it, but I could never pardon myself for giving unnecessary pain to Lord Woodford, and I find it so very difficult to avoid it, that if he remain here any time, I must certainly remove."

At these words Ornvile's countenance betrayed strong marks of passion ; he seemed with difficulty to refrain from uttering some violent expression ; but after remaining a minute silent, he rose hastily, and quitted the room.

CHAPTER V.

Two days passed without Constantia's being further importuned about Lord Woodford, but they were far from passing agreeably. Though her mother forbore to speak to her on the subject, she was evidently unhappy; and Constantia observed, with much uneasiness, that she was often engaged in earnest conversation with Orville, after which, the depression of her spirits was visibly increased.

But the person whose situation affected her the most, was Lord Woodford. She thought she saw in his behaviour the marks of genuine affection, accompanied by an anxiety and diffidence, which was extremely interesting. It occasioned her a perpetual conflict of feelings, which made her every moment in danger of showing him attentions, that would hardly have left her the power of refusing him."

"This must not continue," said she to herself; "I must either resolve to marry Lord Woodford, or instantly leave him."

To the first, her reluctance was too great to be overcome; and she determined on the latter, as the best means of saving him, her mother, and herself, from further uneasiness.

When she took this resolution, her first intention was to inform her mother of it, and request her permission to go to Sir Robert Horndon's; but on reflection she feared that the communicating her design to her, or Mrs. Almorne, might involve them in trouble with her brother; and she, therefore, determined to avow her wishes to her father, and leave the regulation of her conduct to him.

This design was no sooner formed than executed. She easily found an opportunity of speaking to him in private; when she informed him of her sentiments respecting Lord Woodford; represented, in gentle terms, her brother's solicitude for him, and intreated his permission to remove to Sir Robert Horndon's,

as the happiest means of terminating the anxieties of both.

"Sir John, who loved his daughter with extreme tenderness, and entertained a high opinion of her character, received her proposal as a new proof of the excellence of her disposition, and the superiority of her mind, which made her equally incapable of trifling with the feelings of Lord Woodford, or of being captivated with external advantages ; but at the same moment that he was gratified, he was grieved ; for he had secretly, and earnestly, wished her to marry him, from the high opinion he had of his merit, and the various advantages he possessed.

He concealed, however, his regret from his daughter ; expressed high approbation of her wish to separate from Lord Woodford, since she could not accept of him ; and told her that he would himself take her the next day to her sister.

When the weather permitted, Sir John was in the daily practice of taking a ride on horseback, or in a carriage, and in his excursions

was frequently accompanied by Miss Ornville ; it was, therefore, easy for him to attend her, without appearing to have any particular design in view ; and, accordingly, he took her abroad with him the next morning, without her mother, or brother, having any suspicion of their intention.

On their arrival at Elbourne, the seat of Sir Robert Horndon, they found him and Lady Horndon at home, and were earnestly requested to pass the day with them ; Sir John excused himself, but said they might keep Constantia as long as she pleased.

On his return home, he told Lady Ornville before Lord Woodford, that he had been at Elbourne ; adding, in an easy way, that he had been much solicited to dine there, which he had declined, but had left Constantia with her sister.

Soon after he informed his son privately, that it was her intention to remain at Elbourne, while Lord Woodford was at Ornville, and

that he must, therefore, immediately put an end to his expectations.

Ornville, knowing that it was in vain to remonstrate with his father, made no reply, and two days after quitted the Abbey with Lord Woodford.

CHAPTER VI.

THE first day Constantia passed at Elbourne afforded her much satisfaction. Her separation from Lord Woodford relieved her from a state of very painful anxiety ; and she flattered herself she should have the comfort of passing some time with her sister, in as much tranquillity as her concern for the disappointment she had occasioned her mother and Lord Woodford would permit. But in admitting this hope, she forgot, for the moment, the character of her brother-in-law, and soon found that in quitting Ormville Abbey for his house, she had only made an exchange of evils.

Sir Robert Horndon had been bred to the church, and was in possession of a small living ; when at the age of twenty-nine, he succeeded, by the unexpected death of a cousin, to his

title and estate; upon which he gave up his living, and soon after married Miss Ornvile.

His choice of her was owing to what he called, and believed to be, love, but it was the passion of a man who loved only for his own sake. He found an object of affection necessary to his happiness, and as soon as he was in a situation to marry, he fixed on Miss Ornvile, because she happened to be the first agreeable woman that came in his way. He soon became so strongly attached to her, that had he lost her, he would have been for a while distracted; but as soon as the first paroxysm of his grief had subsided, he would again have been ready to marry the first tolerably agreeable woman he could obtain; for he could neither live alone contentedly, nor be happy without some being with whom he could indulge the gratification of fondness.

Education, situation, and disposition concurred in early life, to make him a recluse; indolence, with much love of reading and drawing, strengthened his disposition to retirement, after it was in his power to have emerged from it; and his domestic habits thus confirmed, were mistaken for virtues.

Sir Robert Horndon had no virtues; he lived only for himself; but his understanding was good. He knew what was right, and talked of liberal sentiments, and the rights of humanity. Thus he deceived others, and no person more than himself: for, as he was generally speculatively right, and in his manner of living never wrong, he fancied he was what he ought to be. He was not indeed unconscious that he had a bad temper, but this he considered as a very venial failing, and on the pretext of it, he justified all the unhappiness he made his wife suffer. Of her sufferings the world knew nothing; for he was too anxious to preserve its esteem, to use her ill in the presence of others.

As in his youth he had neither fortune nor connexions to promote his interest, he soon perceived that his only road to preferment in the church, was by the art of pleasing; and, as he had no objection to an artful behaviour, he endeavoured to render himself agreeable to every person he met with, from a great man to the lowest domestic in his family; wisely concluding there was no knowing by what link in the chain he might soonest arrive at the object of his wishes.

This conduct, long practised, became at length natural to him, and was continued after he was Sir Robert, both from habit, and the belief it was what sound policy required ; for though he was now independent of it himself, he might still reap the good effects of it in the persons of his children.

When a young man, he had been a reformer, and had even cherished Utopian sentiments ; but he soon discovered the fallacy of such opinions. A very little reflection, he declared, had convinced him they were erroneous ; that the English government was the best which could exist ; that all the men in power in Britain and Ireland were very great men ; and in proportion as their power strengthened, Sir Robert's admiration of them increased.

It was only before Constantia that his character was unveiled ; her connexion with Lady Horndon, gave her at all times, such easy access to his house, and he had been so long accustomed to view her as a child, that he was still at little pains to disguise himself before her ; especially as he saw that she was not of a disposition to ~~ever~~^{ever}, what it was for the interest of her sister should be concealed.

In this respect she did not disappoint him; for tenderness to her parents, as well as to Lady Horndon, made her carefully conceal his failings from every person except Mrs. Almorne. To her alone she delineated his character, which she fully penetrated, and considered as odious. Open and undisguised herself; incapable of wounding the feelings of any person, far less of those who were dependent upon her, she could hardly repress in his presence the indignation which his conduct inspired; and nothing but regard for Lady Horndon, made her submit to behave to him with civility.

To conceal her dislike to him, as well as to avoid the pain of seeing her sister ill-treated, she had for some time avoided going to his house, unless she was either sure of his being from home, or could carry a companion with her; and as this was not difficult, and Elbourne was not so near as to make frequent visiting very easy, she had lately been so much a stranger to his conduct in private, that the impression of it had been in some measure weakened.

By her sister, she was in no danger of hav-

ing the memory of it revived ; for miserable as Lady Horndon was with her husband, she never complained of him. Happily she viewed him in a more favourable light than he deserved. She had married him from affection, and her regard was augmented by her attachment to her children ; she was flattered by the passionate fondness he often showed for herself, the true cause of which she did not penetrate ; and believed, that if he could govern his temper, his character would be faultless.

Affection is ever ingenious in varnishing the defects of a beloved object, and Lady Horndon was of a mild forgiving disposition. Her understanding was good, but the perpetual terror she lived in of her husband's temper, had blunted the powers of her mind.

When Constantia arrived at Elbourne, Sir Robert happened to be in good humour, and the day passed agreeably, and next morning he went to a county meeting, from which he did not return till the evening.

A little before his arrival, Lady Horndon,

who had been much fatigued with nursing one of her children that was ill, sat down on a sofa, and fell into a slumber. Soon after, being roused by the sound of his carriage as it approached the house, she suddenly started up—hastily arranged some chairs that were displaced, and adjusting her dress in the same hurried manner, sat down at a table in visible anxiety.

Alas! thought Constantia, is this the arrival of a husband!

Sir Robert entered.—“What is the meaning, Lady Horndon,” said he sternly, “that the hall windows are open at this time of night? In this damp weather, all comfort in the house is destroyed by it.”

“I know not,” replied Lady Horndon, mildly, “how they have been neglected; the servants are generally very attentive.”

“It is your business to see that they do their duty.”

“I have been much occupied with——”

“I was not asking,” interrupted Sir Robert impatiently, “how you had been employed;

I only meant to remind you, that if you do not attend to your domestic concerns, you must expect them to be neglected. Did you send for Newman, as I ordered?"

" Yes, but he was not at home."

" When was he expected?"

" Matthew forgot to inquire, but he desired that he might be sent here the moment he came home."

" And you propose to wait patiently till he comes?"

" What else can be done?"

" Send for another carpenter."

" No other can do the work so well."

" I wish, my dear, you could understand how unpleasant it is to hear nonsense."

Silence now ensued, till it was broken by Sir Robert's saying to Lady Horndon, " so you don't think proper to tell me how Fanny does."

" She is better."

" And as that is agreeable information, you chose to keep it till I extorted it from you."

Lady Hornblower gave no answer but a sigh; a long silence again ensued, and was again broken by Sir Robert, who expressed high admiration of his wife's, and Miss Orville's taciturnity.

" When you arrived," said Constantia, " I was inclined to conversation, but imagined you were not disposed for it."

" And my wife, I suppose, imagined, that I was in very bad humour; she has no allowance to make for a man's being tired and disgusted with troublesome business: having nothing to trouble herself, she can form no idea of the irritating things men meet with abroad.—What easy lives some women lead! They know nothing of the hardships men have to encounter: the men especially who are engaged in the bustle of the world."

" I should think," answered Constantia, " that domestic vexations may prey upon the mind as severely as any whatever."

"True," replied Sir Robert; "they may be sufficiently disagreeable, but they fall on men as well as women; whereas the evils I allude to fall solely upon the former. But you, Miss Ornville, know as little of the world as my wife, and have so fair a prospect before you, that you will probably never be a judge of the miseries of life."

"I have little confidence in fair prospects;" returned Constantia, "in a few years I may lose my parents, and then—"

"And then," rejoined Sir Robert, perceiving she hesitated, "you will be married."

"Is marriage the certain road to comfort?"

"I do not say it is; but to you it is likely to prove so, as you have judgment to choose a husband properly, and attractions to secure the means of selection."

"Who," replied Constantia, "could apparently choose more properly than Lady Arcot? Yet it is uncertain if her husband's gaming debts will leave her and her children a sixpence. Whose prospects were fairer

than Mrs. Pickering's? Yet her husband is drunk every day of his life."

" And," said Sir Robert, " for I will good-naturedly assist you; could the beautiful Mrs. Blight have imagined that her husband would choose to have half a dozen mistresses always at her elbow? But, my dear Constantia, do you not know there were very great faults in the conduct of all these women? Lady Arcot was never happy but in a rout:—Is it then surprising that her husband was tempted to play more than was convenient for him? Mrs. Pickering is so very a shrew, that her husband is glad to forget the sound of her voice over a bottle; and as for Mrs. Blight, it is well known that she encourages a train of admirers;—she has no title to complain of her husband's gallantry."

" Which of them first led the way?"

" Perhaps he did, but that is no apology for her; the improprieties of her conduct must encourage his. It is the duty of a wife to overlook the failings of a husband; a prudent one will know it is the only way to reclaim him. Were Lady Horndon to take of-

fence at every little sally of my temper, which she knows means nothing, do you think we should be the happy couple we are? —No, no, Miss Ornville, when you speak of bad husbands, be so good as to remember there may be such a thing as a bad wife."

Constantia found the subject too delicate to be carried farther, and endeavoured to turn the conversation into another channel.

CHAPTER VII.

THE next morning, as the family were sitting down to breakfast, Sir Robert asked Lady Horndon, in an authoritative tone, “ why Edward’s hat was lying on the table ?”

“ I suppose,” answered she, “ he left it here, when he came in from his walk.”

“ I’ll teach him to find another place for it,” cried Sir Robert, with an inflamed countenance; “ Eliza,” continued he, turning to his daughter, “ call Edward.”

Edward soon appeared.

“ The next time,” said his father, giving him his hat, and a blow on the head, “ that I find your hat here, I shall punish you severely.”

Edward started on receiving the blow, and uttered an involuntary cry, upon which Sir Robert struck him repeatedly, saying he would not indulge him in so childish a trick as crying.

Lady Horndon turned pale, and Constantia observed her tremble, while Sir Robert continued long to declaim on the troublesome-ness of children.

At length Lady Horndon ventured an ob-servation in their favour, to which Sir Robert bluntly replied, “ It is a very great pity, my dear, that you are a fool.”

Constantia could with difficulty refrain from expressing the indignation his behaviour ex-cited ; but, the fear of rendering her sister still more unhappy by her interference, made her suppress her resentment, and content herself with attempting to stop his invectives against the children, by asking if he thought beating the most effectual mode of correc-tion ?

“ I believe no other is of any avail,” an-swered Sir Robert.

"Your friend Vyvian is of a very different opinion; he finds well judged deprivations much more efficacious."

"Deprivations are a tedious, troublesome mode of correction; 'tis impossible to remember always at the moment necessary, what deprivations would be proper;—besides, I am persuaded the fear of a rod is the only thing to keep a spirited boy in awe."

"Mr. Vyvian says, the most troublesome boy he ever had, on whom flogging had no effect, was easily subdued by solitary confinement."

"Vyvian is ridiculously fond of his children; he locks them up, I suppose, to save himself the pain of flogging them, and as soon as they have whimpered a little, he will open their cage from mere indulgence."

"You mistake him: In the management of his children he neither indulges their feelings nor his own. He believes one of the most essential requisites in educating them well, is steadiness of conduct; the power he exercises over them, is therefore regulated by

his reason ; and, though gentle, is absolute. They consequently never presume upon his indulgence, and are led to reap at once instruction and satisfaction from his kindness : but he particularly disapproves of corporal punishment, because it debases their spirit, and deprives him of their affections.”

“ Pho ! they never mind it.”

“ If they do not mind it, of what use is it ?”

“ I mean,” replied Sir Robert, peevishly, “ it does not affect them so much as to make them dislike the person who inflicts it.”

“ In many instances,” said Constantia, “ I have known it estrange entirely the affections of children from their parents ; in some it has this effect immediately ; in others, it arises afterwards on reflection.”

To this observation, Sir Robert made no reply ; and Constantia saw, from his countenance, it was full time to drop the conversation.

She soon after withdrew to her apartment, where she had not remained long, when she

heard a gentle tap at the door, and her nephew John, a fine boy of seven, begging to be admitted.

She immediately opened the door, and taking him by the hand, asked what he wanted:

"I want only," replied he, "to sit with you; I want to be away from Papa, who has beat me."

"Why did he beat you, my love?"

"Because I was making a noise when he was speaking."

"Why, my dear, did you make a noise when Papa was speaking?"

"I was only singing; Papa was standing behind the hall-door, speaking to Gregory, and I came through without observing he was there,—but Papa beat me, because he was angry at Gregory; one of the horses is lame, and it has made Papa angry with every body?"

The innocent countenance of the boy, and the tears which bedewed his cheek, affected Constantia ; Sir Robert's mean and cruel exercise of power over his helpless children, outraged her feelings, while it excited the most gloomy apprehensions for its future effects on their mind and character. Their situation was sufficient to embitter every moment she passed in his house, but his harsh and insolent behaviour to his wife affected her still more deeply ; and made her anxiously revolve in her mind various schemes for the relief of Lady Horndon.

The rest of the day nothing material occurred, and the two following passed quietly ; but this calm Constantia hardly felt a blessing. The state of fear, in which Sir Robert kept his family, seemed to her scarcely less miserable than the moments in which they were actually suffering from the violence of his temper. The anxiety with which they laboured to avert his displeasure, seemed to deprive them of all power of enjoyment, while it did not secure them from his wrath ; for his anger was so often without cause, that it was impossible to guard against it.

When he was absent, if his wife and children indulged a little cheerfulness, the sound of his foot was the signal of alarm, and threw them immediately into embarrassment and terror ; when he was present, the lowering of his countenance was like the gathering of clouds which foretel a dreadful storm.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE last evening of Constantia's stay at Elbourne, she was sitting alone in her apartment, when she heard Lady Horndon come up stairs, and go into her dressing-room, which was the room adjoining. A few minutes after Sir Robert followed, and entered into conversation with her.

Constantia could not hear what was said; but, from the sound of their voices, it was evident that he was displeased, and that she was endeavouring to appease him, in mild and supplicating accents. In a short time, she heard Sir Robert raise his voice in a very passionate tone, and Lady Horndon give a scream.

Constantia could no longer keep her seat; she instantly rushed from her own room into

her sister's, where she found her pale and trembling :—on her entrance, Sir Robert brushed hastily by, and went down stairs.

Constantia addressed Lady Horndon in the tenderest manner, and intreated to know what had distressed her.

Lady Horndon pressed her hand, but seemed unwilling to speak.

" My beloved sister," said Constantia, " I hope Sir Robert has not"—her voice faltered.

Lady Horndon understood her, and answered, " No : his manner only frightened me, and I gave an involuntary cry."

" My dear Fanny," said Constantia, folding her sister in her arms, " forgive my saying you are wrong, very wrong, to submit to such treatment."

" What can I do ?"

" Leave him."

"Leave him!—leave my children!"

"Oh!" cried Constantia, with a deep sigh, "why did you not leave him many years ago?"

"Sometimes I regret I did not—but alas! Constantia, at seventeen we little know how to conduct ourselves in difficult situations."

"But you must still separate, unless you can oblige him to govern his temper; you cannot continue in this misery."

"He cannot govern his temper, my dear; it is naturally bad."

"Does he show any ill temper to me? Does he even treat the meanest servant in his family in the manner he does you?—No,—the cause is obvious; he knows they would not submit to it. When Sir Robert married you, had he been assured you could, and would leave him, if he used you ill, he would never have given you occasion to think of it. Propose separation even now, and you

will see an immediate change in his conduct ;
for you are too necessary to his peace, and
the welfare of his children, to permit him to
part with you."

" He would never forgive the proposal."

" He has too much sense not to forgive it, if made in a proper manner. Does he not know how patiently you have submitted to his temper ? How vain your intreaties and remonstrances have been, and that you can have nothing to hope, when you still meet with such usage, after your life has been for almost thirteen years uniformly devoted to his happiness ?"

" If I could leave him, ought I to forsake my children, whom he will never relinquish ? When he uses them ill, I wish to bury them and myself in the grave ; at other times, I am willing to suffer any thing for their sakes."

" For their sakes, if not for your own, you ought to seek the means of reforming him. If you do not, their spirits will be broken, and

and their talents lost ; a state of fear ruins the mind. Do not imagine I could desire you to sacrifice their interest to your own ease ; far from it :—for a good purpose, I would have you submit patiently to any suffering ; but, in your case, I am persuaded submission is injurious to your children, as well as to yourself : it is even hurtful to your husband ; for it allows him to indulge a temper which is the ruin of his peace.”

“ I believe there is too much truth in all you say ; but what would our friends think of my leaving him ? ”

“ That you did right.”

“ They would never believe that I had cause for so strong a measure ; there is no example of separation in such circumstances.”

“ Few, I fear ; I say fear, because the necessity for such separations certainly exists, and examples might be useful.”

“ It is not for me to set the example, who have but one distress to complain of.”

" It is for you to set the example, if that single distress renders you miserable. It is not surely by the number, but by the weight of misfortunes, that misery must be estimated. Your suffering so much from one, may evince the necessity of separations where women have many to contend with. What inhuman treatment of wives have I seen, which would have ceased, had the law provided for separations."

" Such provision, Constantia, might lead to separations which ought not to take place."

" There is no institution, my dear Fanny, which may not be liable to abuse; but it might save many amiable women from undeserved misery, and lessen the temptation to separation, by improving the conduct of married people."

" But since the law does not oblige Sir Robert to provide for me, if I leave him, how can I throw myself a burden upon my father?"

" How can you speak of being a burden on your father? Your misfortune, indeed, would

afflict him, but pecuniary considerations could have no share in his concern."

" He would undoubtedly condemn my leaving my husband, when so many women, more unfortunate, submit in silence to their fate."

" The women who do so, may not have such kind fathers to protect them, or such exemplary conduct as yours to secure them from reproach."

" Can I expose the father of my children to reproach?"

" It will be unnecessary ; the merely proposing separation will reform him : but do not mistake me ; I cannot wish you to practise the smallest insincerity, and do not therefore follow my advice, if you have not resolution to adhere to it, should my sanguine expectations be disappointed."

" If I durst trust in them"—

" You have the utmost reason to do so ; for, independent of your importance to Sir Robert's happiness, he values his reputation a great deal

too much, to let it be known that he was such a tyrant as to oblige so good a wife as you to leave him."

Lady Horndon appeared to yield at length to Constantia's reasoning, and promised she would at least deliberate well on what she had said, and endeavour to benefit from her advice. She expressed, in very ardent terms, the consolation and support which her sister's kindness had always afforded her; while Constantia assured her, in the most affectionate manner, that she should ever feel it a happiness to have the smallest opportunity of contributing to her peace.

Constantia now ventured to hope she saw some prospect of an alleviation of Lady Horndon's misery; and, under this impression, she passed the rest of the evening in greater tranquillity than she had felt at any time since the first day of her arrival at Elbourne. Sir Robert behaved uncommonly well; and, from the expression of his countenance, she was led to hope he felt some contrition for his conduct.

CHAPTER IX.

A FEW days after Constantia's arrival at Elbourne, she received a note from her Father informing her of Lord Woodford's departure, and requesting her to return home; but at the earnest solicitation of her sister, she consented to remain with her some days longer.

The morning fixed for her return to Ornville, was welcomed by her with much joy, but the regret she felt in leaving Lady Horndon, made her anxiously endeavour to prevail on her and Sir Robert to accompany her, and pass some days at the Abbey. Sir Robert would not consent, upon which Constantia entreated that they would at least spend one day with her father and mother, as it was long since they had met; but Sir Robert was not in a humour to go from home, and as he never chose to be in his own house

without his wife, he would only permit her to convey Constantia to Ornville on condition she should return before dinner.

On their arrival at the Abbey, they found Lady Ornville alone, and it was so seldom he saw Lady Horndon without company, that she earnestly requested her to pass the day at Ornville.

Lady Horndon assured her, it would give her particular pleasure to do so, but that she had promised to Sir Robert to return before dinner, and knew he would be so uncomfortable in her absence, that she could not think of disappointing him.

"I must then," said Lady Ornville, "admit your apology; and I hope it will have some effect in making your sister more inclined to matrimony, than she appears to be at present. Who can be an infidel to conjugal happiness, when they see a man after being twelve years a husband, unable to pass a day agreeably without his wife?"

Lady Horndon turned to her sister to hide the rising tear, while the latter made a slight answer to her mother, and diverted the conversation to other topics while Lady Horndon remained.

After her departure, Constantia feared that she should find her mother's spirits depressed by her disappointment about Lord Woodford, and not, perhaps, without displeasure at her abrupt departure; but her fears were quickly removed by Lady Ornville's expressing much joy, unmixed with reproaches, at seeing her again at home.

"You took the best way, my love," said her mother, "to relieve us all; though at first I was a little uneasy at your unexpected disappearance, I was soon convinced that it was the wisest plan you could pursue. Your brother ceased then to torment himself and me, and Woodford was prevented from cherishing expectations, which could not be realized.—It taught me too your importance, Constance, for it is long since I passed a week without you before; and I now find that separation from you would be very painful."

These expressions took a weight off the ~~the~~ mind of Constantia, which had hung heavy upon it; and she expressed much gratitude for her mother's kindness, with renewed regret for the disappointment she had occasioned her.

"My dear child," said Lady Ornvile, "let us think no more of what is past; I should certainly have rejoiced if you could have been happy in marrying Woodford, but I am now sensible I should have been a sufferer by it: you are the only one of my children now left me; and melancholy indeed should I have been without you."

Constantia's joy was extreme, in seeing her mother restored to peace, and in finding herself once more in tranquillity at Ornvile. The painful state of mind in which she had quitted it, and the society of Sir Robert Horn-don, made her feel delighted in being again peacefully at home. The goodness of her father she had always admired, but after a week passed with Sir Robert, he appeared to her angelic, and she could not look at him, or

her mother, without feeling her heart fill with tenderness and delight.

Every object at Ornvile appeared to her with new charms ; and there was hardly a chair, or table, which she did not greet as old friends, whom she rejoiced to meet again.

Ornvile Abbey was a venerable pile of Gothic architecture ; it was founded in the thirteenth century for Monks of the Cistercian order ; was surrendered in the sixteenth, and soon after granted to Sir Humphry Ornvile. Much of it was now in ruins, but a part remained entire, adjoining which a house had been built by the Ornvile family, which, though it corresponded externally with the venerable remains of the Abbey, was adorned within with all the elegance of modern taste.

The Abbey was extremely admired as one of the most beautiful reliques of ancient grandeur, and could not be seen with indifference by any person of taste or feeling. It inspired that elevation of sentiment,—those sublime, but melancholy ideas, on which contemplative

minds dwell with enthusiasm.—It was placed in a situation which showed it to the utmost advantage. Near it the aged oak appeared, to vie in grandeur with the walls of the Abbey, rising in all the beauty of Gothic architecture ; and the surrounding scene was rich in natural beauties, on which the eye dwelt with delight.

Constantia wandered eagerly over all her favourite walks, and scarcely passed a tree or shrub without apostrophising it.—It was now the end of May, an enchanting season, suited to give full play to the delightful flow of spirits, with which she was animated. Hitherto she had thought herself happy, but the peculiar satisfaction she now experienced, made her exclaim,

“ Alas ! by some degree of wo,
We every bliss obtain ;
That heart can ne’er a transport know,
Which never felt a pain.”

CHAPTER X.

CONSTANTIA had passed a week delightfully at Ornvile; when one morning, the weather being fine, she took a ride to Ramsgate, and stopped at B——'s library to get a novel for her mother.

On entering the library she saw no one in it, except a gentleman, who seemed earnestly engaged in looking at some landscapes, which laid on a table.

Though not a professed disciple of Lavater, she seldom saw strangers without seeking to enlarge her knowledge of human nature, by some observation of their features; her attention was thus attracted to the gentleman, whose side face only she could see; but, on her advancing, he turned, and discovered a countenance uncommonly expressive.

Her attention was, however, quickly withdrawn from him, by observing his eyes earnestly fixed upon her. It was not the unmeaning stare of idle or impertinent curiosity, but the inquiring look of an intelligent mind, conscious of powerful attraction.

Constantia turned over some books which laid on the counter, and then asked the shopman for Hermsprong, or *Man as he is not?*

She was told it was not at home, upon which the gentleman advancing, and pulling a book from his pocket, begged she would permit him to offer her Hermsprong?

She politely declined his offer, but he persisted in intreating her acceptance of it, declaring that he had only taken Hermsprong from finding it lying on the counter.— “Here,” continued he, taking up *Delves*, a Welch tale, “is another, which I dare say, will please the lady, who sent me hither for a novel, equally well.

“I cannot think,” said Constantia, that

"the lady will be pleased with so simple a tale."

"Pardon me," he replied, "to the admirers of nature, and simplicity, I am told that it has charms; and what charms are more powerful?"

"None, to an uncorrupted mind," answered Constantia.

"If you, Madam," said the gentleman, laying hold of the landscapes he had been looking at, "are an admirer of the sublime and beautiful in nature, permit me to show you these landscapes, which appear to be admirably delineated."

On looking at them, Constantia found they were most beautiful views in Switzerland; and her attention soon became fully engaged in admiring them, and conversing with the gentleman on the subjects to which they naturally led, on all of which he discovered much intelligence and taste.

After a considerable time had been spent in this manner, she recollects that she had en-

croached too much on his time ; and after apologising for her inadvertency, took leave.

He attended her to the door, assisted her to mount her horse, and followed her with his eye, as long as she was within its reach ; which she discovered by turning her head towards him, at the moment she was about to lose sight of the spot on which she had left him standing.

Constantia found herself interested in this stranger. She thought she had never seen a man, whose countenance and manners were more prepossessing, or whose conversation was more agreeable, and she earnestly wished to know who he was. She lamented the little probability there was of her ever seeing him again ; for it was evident that he had not come to Ramsgate for health, and that he was probably one of those strangers, who come to it for a few days or weeks, and the period of his stay was possibly at a close ; at all events, she could have little hope of meeting with him again.

She admitted this idea with reluctance. How seldom, thought she, do we meet with a

congenial mind !—This stranger expressed my sentiments better than I could do myself ; every look, every word from him, was impressive,—every sentence he dropped, was just what I could have wished to have said.—How powerful is sympathy ! I think myself already well acquainted with this stranger ; yet I shall, probably, never see him more,—never even know by what means to inquire his destiny !

She wondered who the lady was that had sent him to the library,—perhaps his mother or sister,—possibly his wife ; yet there was something in his manner, which led her to suppose he was unmarried. Her imagination figured the lady in a thousand different forms, and whoever she was, she thought her fortunate in the acquaintance of such a man.

She was so much absorbed in these reflections, that unmindful of the time, she suffered her horse to walk at its own pace till he stopped at the Abbey, when on looking at her watch, she found the afternoon was far advanced, and upon inquiring of the servants, was told the family were at dinner.

CHAPTER X.

ON entering the dining-room, Constantia found several guests with her father and mother; Mr. and Mrs. Bafset, who were neighbours; Mrs. Almorne; Sir Esmond Anson, her father's nephew; and her eldest brother.

Her arrival seemed to give joy to every one of the company except Ornvile, who affected not to see her; but his neglect was amply compensated by the pleasure she felt on seeing Mrs. Almorne, and Sir Esmond, whom she loved as a brother.

Mr. Bafset finding that she had been at Ramsgate, asked if she had seen many strangers there?

" Only one, Sir," she replied.

" Only one!" exclaimed Mr. Basset, " that is the most extraordinary thing I ever heard of! It was but yesterday that Mr. Dormer told me that Ramsgate was full of company."

Constantia blushed at the absence she had betrayed, and endeavoured to repair it, by saying, " she believed it was ; she recollects there was a crowd."

" You believe," said Mr. Basset, smiling, " you recollect there was a crowd ;—after that it will be needless to inquire who the stranger was that you saw ; you could not probably recollect whether he was black or brown,—tall or short,——Eh?"

Sir Esmond, desirous to relieve her from the evident confusion which this speech threw her into, begged to know what book she had brought into the room with her?

" Ay, Constance," said Lady Orville, tell me what you have got. I hope it is something good."

" I know little more of it, Ma'am, than the name," answered Constantia.

"What is the name?" asked Lady Ornvile.

"Hermsprong, or Man as he is not."

"Hermsprong!" cried Ornvile, raising his voice, "how can you, Constantia, bring such democratic stuff to your mother?"

"I did not know it was democratic; I chose it only from hearing Mr. Ludlow say, that it was an admirable comedy."

"Yes, yes;" replied Ornvile, "I dare say, that he, and all such dissenters, think it admirable;—they are the pest of society, and would tumble us all to the ground, if they could; but, thanks to his Majesty and his ministers, it will not be in their power. I hope the reign of George the third, will be the longest, as it is the most glorious in the annals of England."

"It has certainly," said Sir John, "been the most remarkable for naval achievements."

"And it is singular," said Mrs. Almorne, "that it should have been so at a period of greater dissatisfaction among the seamen than

ever was known : victories have been obtained amidst a series of mutinies ; and when it may be fairly presumed that many of the Irish engaged in them, did not wish well to the cause for which they fought."

" It fully shows," observed Sir Esmond, " the effect of skill and discipline. In time of peace, our merchantmen are an excellent nursery for seamen, and when they get on board an English ship of war, their duty is so constant, and so very strictly observed, that they acquire astonishing firmness and dexterity in the execution of it ; and during an engagement, as they can neither retreat, nor indulge even a momentary intermission of duty, without consequences which they cannot risk, they have no choice but to fight.— They have likewise the advantage of knowing that they are opposed to enemies who are much inferior in skill to themselves.* I have been assured by seamen I could trust, that English sailors can manœuvre a ship, and fire the guns in half the time that French or

* This Work was written before the conclusion of the war.

Dutchmen can. The Spaniards are still more deficient; insomuch that on the meeting of an English and Spanish ship, the former reckon the latter a certain prize. During the American war, and through the whole of the present, it has been well-known by the sailors, that no commander of an English fleet need hesitate to attack a Spanish one, of even double the force. Thus may be explained the difference which has appeared so perplexing between the event of our naval and military engagements."

"This account," said Mrs. Almorne, "exhibits naval actions more as an effect of machinery than I had imagined."

"Sailors and soldiers, and the mass of mankind," cried Ornvile, "should be mere machines. I hope the many will ever be governed by the few."

"Dear Mr. Ornvile," exclaimed Mrs. Bafset, "don't talk of governing; I hate the very word, and when politics begin, there is no end to them:—for my part, I don't understand them. Pray, Mrs. Almorne, what have women to do with politics?"

"Nothing," answered Mrs. Almorne, "if they do not understand them."

"And how can they understand them?" asked Mrs. Basset.

"Really," replied Mrs. Almorne, with a smile, "I do not see how they can."

"I thought so," cried Mrs. Basset, exultingly: "I thought your good sense would perceive they could know nothing of the matter; yet, I see women, keen;—nay, bitter about politics, who know no more about them than my children."

"I believe, indeed," said Mr. Basset, "that nothing could puzzle many ladies more, than to desire an explanation of their political principles."

"They might tell you," said Lady Ornville, "as Mrs. Ermine told me, that she entertained certain political opinions, though she did not know why."

"I hate nothing so much as politics," cried Mrs. Basset."

"I thought," said Lady Ornvile, "you were very fond of reading parliamentary debates."

"O, not at all; I only read Mr. P...’s speeches, that I may know what to think; but I never read Mr. F...’s, as I was sure he was in the wrong."

"I never could resist looking at them," said Mr. Bafset, "but I seldom finished them, for he sometimes almost persuaded me he was in the right, and I did not like to be perplexed by his reasoning."

"You are very different from Mrs. Almorne," said Ornvile; "I have heard her declare she reckoned it one of the misfortunes of her life, the not having heard F... speak in parliament."

"Parliamentary debates," said Mrs. Almorne, "carried on by men of great abilities, are one of the highest entertainments, and the being debarred from them I feel a severe deprivation."

"I cannot think, my dear Mrs. Almorne,"

cried Mrs. Basset, “ you have much cause to regret it ; you can always get the debates in the newspapers, where you can have just as much, or as little of them as you please, and as women have no occasion for public speaking, they need not wish to be in the House of Commons to learn oratory.”

“ Women can learn that at home,” said Mr. Basset, significantly ; “ the passions teach us eloquence ; though, if I may venture my opinion before so many ladies, I think women more remarkable for the number than the choice of their words,—for rapidity more than fluency of speech.”

“ I confess,” said Sir John, “ I think women are generally inferior in eloquence, even to the men who are as little employed as themselves in public speaking.”

“ That is probably owing,” said Mrs. Almorne, “ to their ideas being seldom so clear, or well arranged as those of men, from their inferior education. Their minds are often so uncultivated, that they form opinions without knowing the foundation of them, or the

train of argument by which they should be supported."

" I have no doubt," replied Sir John, " that any mental inferiority observable in the fair sex, must be attributed to difference of education, for it sufficiently appears from the history of mankind, that genius is of no sex."

" Women," said Sir Esmond, " have certainly evinced their pretensions to high intellectual powers; they have been distinguished as authors, philosophers, legislators, and even as warriors; yet, is it not singular, that the fine arts, to which it might have been expected that they would sooner have been led by character, taste, and situation, should have been so very little indebted to them?"

" That is a remarkable fact," replied Sir John, " which it seems difficult to account for; the varieties and inequalities of the human race are perplexing."

" They are so," said Mrs. Almorne, " and none has struck me more of late than another

remarkable fact respecting women. Will you explain to me, why revenge, which is so powerful a passion in the human breast, should so seldom mark their conduct? Amidst all the atrocities which the rebellion in Ireland has produced in that unfortunate country, we hear of no woman distinguishing herself by the spirit of revenge, though so many must have been goaded to it, not only by their own sufferings, but those of their parents, husbands, and children."

"I believe," said Sir Esmond, "the same observation may apply to the French women; since the Revolution, there have been many instances of the greatest outrage and cruelty among the lower classes of women acting collectively; and in the higher ranks there have been numerous examples of heroic contempt of death, but few of deliberate individual revenge."

"It must be attributed," said Orville, "to the timidity and humanity natural to the sex."

"I should think," replied Mrs. Almorne, "that the cruelty and ferocity often conspi-

cuous in the lower class of females, and the malignity too frequently observable in women of every rank, must lead us to seek another explanation."

"A more probable one," observed Sir John, "may be their early habits of submission.---They soon discover that their place in society does not permit the indulgence of their passions, and are accustomed to control them. It is probably from this cause that they are so remarkable for passive courage. The magnanimity with which they meet death; the heroic fortitude with which they suffer, in times of persecution, the most cruel tortures, and their patient endurance, both of bodily and mental pain, may, in a great measure, be attributed to their state in society."

"It certainly must," replied Sir Esmond; "but may not the suppression of revenge in the female breast, be likewise owing to their having the means of gratifying it little in their power? Were they taught the use of firearms, their resentment might oftener appear."

"It is then very fortunate," said Mr Basset, "that they cannot handle a musket."

"In that view it may be so," replied Mrs. Almorne, "but on other accounts I have long thought that women should be trained to the use of fire-arms; their education renders them too helpless."

"You would then," said Ornvile, "destroy the female character."

"I think it very possible," answered Mrs. Almorne, "to render women more independent, without hardening their manners. My father, who was a soldier, taught me the use of a musket, as he thought the day might come, when it would enable me to protect myself and others; and to this I have been indebted for much firmness in situations, which would have overpowered most women."

"I should dread the effect of such education," rejoined Ornvile; "women should be the solace, not the rivals of men."

"Women," said Mrs. Almorne, should be useful to themselves and others, as far as they

can be so, without injury to their proper place in society ; I would not have them either legislators or soldiers ; but I would endeavour to put an end to that womanish weakness which is so often a misfortune to themselves, and a torment to others."

"Would you fear no bad consequences," asked Lady Orville, "from putting arms into the hands of such a multitude?"

"None," replied Mrs. Almorne ; "women would be restrained in the use of them by the same, and more causes, than influence men, while they might derive from them important benefit. Amidst the calamities of war, particularly, is it not to be regretted that women should often be defenceless, from their ignorance of an art, which a boy may become expert in."

"I am much inclined to be of your opinion," said Sir John, "but it requires consideration."

"If it requires consideration," cried Mrs. Bassett, "I beseech you, Sir, to drop the subject ; the mention of fire-arms gives me a fit of the ague."

"And the sight of them," said Mr. Basset, "deprives you of your senses, as I know but too well. It is not a month ago since we were robbed in our carriage by a poor looking dog, whom I could easily have intimidated, had it not been for her cursed squalling, and holding my arm: and 'tis ten to one that she had shot herself; for in the struggle my pistol went off, and——"

"Lord!" interrupted Mrs. Basset, "why will you be always harping on that string? Have we not quarrelled about it a hundred times?"

"I only wished, my dear, to show how you risked——"

"What does it signify what I risked, when the thing is over?"

"But, my dear, you should know again——"

"How," interrupted Mrs. Basset passionately, "do you suppose I can have recollection at such a time? You would persuade me out of my senses."

"I only wish I could persuade you into them."

"You are really very civil—but you are always so violent!"

"Violent! I am perfectly calm; but really, my dear, your absurd behaviour would provoke any mortal."

"No mortal could have acted otherwise than I did. Would you have a woman to be a man?"

"I would only have a woman to have common sense. Did you not hear what Mrs. Almorne said?"

"Yes, but did not Mr. Ornvile say, that women should be just what they are?"

"Mr. Ornvile is not a married man."

"That is quite one of your reflections, but Mr. Ornvile is right."

"My dear, if you would only listen—"

"I will not listen; it does not signify talking."

" You are really too ridiculous, my love."

" And you are always so unreasonable, my dear.—I declare the conversation to-day has been as shocking as when men talk of professional subjects before ladies."

" Come then, Madam," said Lady Ornville, " let us retire to the tea-table, and leave the gentlemen to discuss what subjects they think proper."

CHAPTER XII.

Mr. and Mrs. Bafset left Ornvile in the evening, and were soon followed by Mrs. Almorne, who had only come to take leave of the family previously to her departure on a tour, which would detain her some time from home.

As soon as she was gone, Ornvile had a private conference with his mother; after which she desired to speak to Constantia in her own apartment. Her countenance wore the appearance of considerable anxiety, while she thus addressed her:

" You must know, my dear, that your brother's errand here to-day, is to get some money from your father; he has immediate

occasion for five hundred pounds, which, though no great sum, I am afraid your father will not consent to give. He thinks Hastings has spent a great deal too much,—but he should consider, more than I think he does, how difficult it is for a young man to calculate his expenses with the economy of an old one."

"It is not," said Constantia, "the amount, but the nature of his expenses, which my father chiefly repines at."

"I admit they have been ill-judged, but his situation is some apology for them. He has been bred in affluence, and can form no idea of the economy, which his father and I were obliged to practice when we married. We were obliged to deliberate on the expenditure of every guinea ; Hastings, on the contrary, had his expenses so liberally supplied till he was twenty-five, that he neither knew the want, nor truly understood the value of money.—He would have been happier, and more prudent, probably, had he been differently situated, but that is past ;—his habits

cannot now be entirely broken, when he knows that he is heir to a handsome fortune ; but you are not ignorant, I believe, that his conduct has been lately much altered for the better?"

"I am not."

"Consider this, and attend to what I say. All the money he has lately got from your father, beyond his settled allowance, has been obtained through me ; but the last time I applied for him, your father forbade me to do it again, in a manner which renders it impossible for me to attempt it. I told Hastings this to-night, and desired him to borrow the money, but he says he has already borrowed so much, that it is impossible for him to get more in that way, without paying the most exorbitant interest."

"Had he not better pay any interest than distress my father?"

"I thought so at first, but he has convinced me that your father ought not to be distressed with his present demand, as it really is to clear

an old debt, which, from his altered mode of life, cannot be incurred again. It is, therefore, your father's interest to advance the money, as it may otherwise be hereafter a heavy debt on the estate. From these considerations I am anxious that he should get it ; and it occurred to me that you might obtain it for him."

"Had he not better write to my father on the subject?"

"He would feel almost as much difficulty in writing as speaking to him ; besides the moment I suggested your doing it, he eagerly grasped at the proposal ; for he knows well the indulgence with which your father listens to any wish of yours."

"What must my father think of my presuming to urge a demand, which he has forbidden you to make ?"

"You have nothing to do with that,—he will consider you as merely complying with your brother's wish."

“But how can I request, what he thinks it wrong to grant?”

“ You have no occasion to request ; you have only to state the facts I shall mention to you, and your father himself will see the propriety of complying with your brother’s desire. You can have no objection to this.—Why are you silent, Constantia ?”

“ Because I feel unhappy at the idea of speaking to my father on such a subject.”

“ It is unfortunate to be sure ; but as things are, how can it be properly avoided ?—It is your duty, certainly, to serve your brother,—it is your duty at all times ; but after the disappointment you have lately occasioned him, I should have expected that you would have been particularly glad to have had an opportunity of obliging him.”

“ Gladly would I oblige him, if I could do so without giving pain to my father.”

“ I am afraid, Constantia, you are more afraid of giving pain to your father, than to your mother.”

"O, say not so,—you know not how it grieves me to give you the smallest uneasiness."

"I know, my love, you are good, but I sometimes suspect you love your father better than me."

"Do not afflict me by the supposition," cried Constantia, eagerly grasping her mother's hand.

"My dear child," said Lady Ornville, "I could not blame you if you did; your ways are more assimilated to his; and he is so excellent, that you cannot love him too much. It afflicts me that you should see any difference between us, and you see it but too well. He thinks our dissimilarity has been of little consequence to me, but he is greatly mistaken;—my cards could hardly be more distressing to him, than his books have often been to me: they deprived me of his society, and made me frequently feel alone, and melancholy, even in his presence.—But I see this subject distresses you;—let us return to our business."

"Tell me, my dear mother, what it is you

wish me to do, and I shall instantly do it."

"Nothing, my dear, can be done to-night; your brother does not like to be near your father, when he makes a demand for money; and, therefore, does not wish you to mention it, till he has left the Abbey; to-morrow morning, after breakfast, he proposes taking Sir Esmond with him to Ramsgate, that you may have an easy opportunity of speaking to your father, and he will leave Nelson to bring him a letter from you."

Lady Ornville then gave Constantia all the information respecting her brother's affairs, which it was necessary to communicate to Sir John; and Constantia having promised to do every thing she desired, they rejoined the family.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN Ornville, and Sir Esmond, left the Abbey in the morning, Sir John withdrew to his library, whither Constantia followed him.

He was not surprised at her doing so, as she was in the habit of reading there; but when he observed that she sat gravely without taking a book, he kindly inquired, why she was so thoughtful?

She attempted to answer, but her voice faltered, and she stopped without finishing a sentence.

Her behaviour excited his surprise and concern, and he earnestly desired to know what had thus affected her?

The fear of alarming him gave her courage

to speak ; and she informed him, in concise and simple terms, of her brother's situation.

He listened without interrupting her ; and when she ceased speaking, remained silent for some time, with a countenance strongly expressive of distress.

At length he said, “ I am not surprised, my dear, that you should feel pain in complying with your brother's request ; you know it must afflict me, though you do not know how much. It is not his debts which disturb me ; for them I am prepared ; but I had flattered myself, he came here yesterday without any sinister design ; and the being constantly disappointed in his affection, is far more painful than his extravagance. I am hurt too, that he should always mistake me so much as to suppose that I will yield to entreaty, what I refuse to affection or reason. He ought to know, that I have hitherto relieved his pecuniary distresses, less in compliance with the wishes of his mother, than from other motives ; and he ought, therefore, to have spoken or written to me himself, instead of employing you.”

"As he is situated," replied Constantia, "he must feel much pain in either speaking or writing to you upon the subject."

"He believes, Constantia, that you will be a more successful negotiator than himself. I have no doubt you have represented his case in the most favourable manner, and are willing to be his advocate, as far as it is in your power."

"In all that I have said, I have only given a simple statement of the circumstances I was informed of."

"Would you think it right in me to comply with his request?"

"I should be happy if you thought it right; I believe his situation is exactly as he has represented it."

"You would, therefore, approve of my giving the money?"

"It would relieve him from a very disagreeable state, and would probably encourage his reformation."

“ On his reformation I have little dependence, unless he finds it convenient for himself, and the greatness of his debts may perhaps conduce to his economy, as the loss must ultimately fall upon himself.”

“ But still, debt must involve him in distress, and lessen his respectability.”

“ Enough, my dear,—his demand shall be granted, and for your sake. Before I began to speak to you, I had little hesitation what I ought to do ; and determined, if you favoured his request, to comply with it, that you might have an opportunity of obliging him. I shall tell him that for once he owes his success to his agent. Your refusal of Woodford has irritated him ; I observed his cold behaviour to you yesterday, and wish to make him sensible of the injustice he does you. Were I to refuse the money, he would imagine you had not interested yourself for him ; for he believes I can deny you nothing : but how can I refuse, when you never make a request, which I ought not to grant ! My admiration of you is almost greater than my affection,—you are

the solace of my life in affliction,—the delight of my heart in happier hours !”

Constantia took the hand of her father, and wept over it.—“ Can there,” cried she, “ be a stronger incentive to virtue than such affection,—such praise ! How angelic is the kindness of such a father !”

Constantia loved her father with the most unbounded affection ; she revered him in such a manner, that his least words made an indelible impression on her mind ; and any expressions of esteem or affection from him, were the most delightful sounds she could hear.

Sir John was not unaffected with the tenderness she discovered, and it was sometime before they could renew the conversation.

At length he desired her to take a pen, and he would dictate a letter to her brother ;—“ but stay,” added he, “ it is better I should write to him myself, for it may not be well for you to write, what I think it proper to say.”

He then wrote a few lines, which he desired her to enclose in a note from herself,

after showing them to her mother. "Does she," he asked, "know of your brother's application to me?"

Constantia answered in the affirmative.

"Was it she, or Hastings, who proposed your speaking to me?—But I may spare you the pain of answering; your countenance is sufficiently expressive. I might have guessed, indeed, how it was; he would not have treated you in the unkind manner he did yesterday, if he had come here with the intention of asking a favour of you."

"My mother was persuaded——"

"Stop my dear; I am not displeased that she should wish to relieve Hastings; I know she must feel for his distresses, and be lenient to his failings; but I am grieved that you should receive opposite impressions from your parents; you cannot approve of the one, without, in some degree, condemning the other. I am distressed whenever you see us at variance; but since our disagreements

cannot be concealed from you, may they prove lessons for your conduct through life. Remember, that mutual forbearance is indispensable to the happiness of married people; that ready and cheerful acquiescence in small requests is essential to their harmony, and that conjugal felicity may be lost by small matters, as well as by great.

“ Endeavour to please the husband, as you gained the lover; think no circumstance of behaviour too trifling to merit attention; for the happiness of domestic intercourse hangs upon such delicate chords, that the smallest stretch of them may prove fatal.—A generous man will not take advantage of your goodness to impose fetters upon you; but should you be unfortunate in a husband, the conduct I recommend, is still your best chance for comfort in a state in which repentance is vain.

“ Should you have children, endeavour to form their characters in such a manner, as may render them useful and happy in every situation. Were Hastings amiable, I should forgive his errors; for they are the offspring of

education. Encouraged from infancy in the indulgence of his passions,—his wants no sooner felt than supplied ;—bred to no profession, with a great estate in prospect,—is it surprising that he fell into habits of dissipation, and extravagance ?—I ought to have foreseen this, but I nourished fallacious hopes, and had too little influence on your mother, to prevent her misconduct ; much of which I discovered only when it was too late.

“ To her my displeasure was as a passing cloud, forgotten as soon as passed ; her light and cheerful temper was not to be repressed by slight uneasiness ; and she has never known real misfortune. To me, our dissimilarity has been one. I have hardly ever felt myself at home, since I fixed my residence at Ornville ; since I attained the situation, which I fancied was to secure my felicity.

“ I had hoped to make this venerable mansion the seat of peace and retirement,—the resort only of such society as I should draw hither from motives of friendship, esteem, or humanity ; but it has been the resort of the most

insignificant beings: for the door of a hotel, which your mother made her house, must be open to almost every kind of guest.

“The importance of great affairs on human happiness, all are aware of; but few consider the influence which things, apparently trivial, have on the peace of individuals.”

Sir John paused a few moments, and then desired Constantia to go to her mother.

“She will be anxious,” said he, “to know the result of our conference; and I can never think of her feeling distress, without suffering myself;—respect her intentions, my child, they are always good.”

Constantia left her father with a mixture of sensations, which it would be difficult to describe.

She found her mother most anxiously waiting her return, and full of apprehensions, from which she had the satisfaction of relieving her, and of restoring her to tranquillity.

CHAPTER XIV.

As Constantia was taking a walk in the evening, she met with Sir Esmond Anson returning from Ramsgate on horseback.

The moment he saw her, he alighted, and, giving his horse to his groom, accosted her with a smile, saying, “ as your attention, Miss Ornvile, was not distracted yesterday at Ramsgate, by a variety of objects, I dare say you will be able to give me some description of the stranger you saw there; was he a middle sized man about my age, with a very dark complexion, and fine eye?”

Constantia, who had hoped the answer she had given Mr. Basset was forgotten, was disconcerted by this address, and still more by Sir Esmond’s inquiring if she was a great admirer of picturesque views in Switzerland?

Perceiving that her meeting with the stranger was known to him, she asked if he was acquainted with the gentleman she had seen at B——'s?

"Intimately," he replied; "he is one of the oldest friends I have; we were school-companions, and have been much together since; you have often heard me speak of him."

"I do not remember your ever mentioning him before."

"You know his name, then?"

"No, I had forgot,—how stupid!"

"It is not you who are stupid," said Sir Esmond, with a smile, "but I, who am an unskilful painter; had I delineated him faithfully, you must have known the original by the picture."

"You are very ingenious in explaining my absence."

"Shall I do it more simply?" asked Sir Esmond; but without giving her time to re-

ply, he proceeded to inform her, that her new acquaintance was Captain Valmonsor, whom she must remember to have heard him speak of. "He is at present," continued Sir Esmond, "stationed with his regiment at Ramsgate, which I did not know till I met with him accidentally this morning."

"How agreeable your meeting so unexpectedly!"

"You may believe it was. He soon asked if I was come to pass the summer in Kent, when I told him I should only be a short time in it at Ornvile. At the mention of the name he seemed electrified, and I then discovered your meeting with him at B——'s, where he had inquired your name."

"Does he expect to remain any time at Ramsgate?"

"He does; and I intend to ask your father's permission to bring him here; have you any objection?

"None, certainly; I shall rejoice to see

him, both as your friend, and the stranger I saw at B——'s."

" The more you see him, the more you will be pleased with him. I know him well, and think him one of the first characters I ever met with. From the conversation you had with him, you must have perceived he had a superior understanding and taste, and you will always find him uniformly agreeable. He is perfectly well bred,—above all affectation ; and persons of sensibility will quickly discern that it is not wanting in him. To your father his society will be an acquisition ; —to you, I am afraid, he may prove too agreeable."

" A too agreeable man," said Constantia, " is a phenomenon, which excites my curiosity more than my fear."

" Your curiosity shall speedily be gratified. To-morrow he wished me to spend with him at Ramsgate, which my engagement with you to go to Elbourne, made me decline, but the next day I have promised to be with him, and the following morning I hope to bring him here."

"Have you not said too much in his praise? High raised expectations often lead to disappointment."

"I should not be sorry if that were the effect, for my fears are of an opposite nature; but I hope you have skill sufficient to manage prudently, a retreat, where you find there is danger."

Constantia was spared a reply, by their arrival at the house interrupting the conversation; but, on their joining Sir John and Lady Ornvile, she heard Sir Esmond again speak of Captain Valmonsor in a strain of very high encomium.

"Let us have the pleasure of seeing your friend here," said Sir John in reply; "bring him as soon, and as often as you can: as a stranger, I should be desirous to show him every civility; but as your friend, and the man you describe, I should wish him to consider Ornvile Abbey as a home during his stay in Kent."

Constantia felt great satisfaction at this

discovery of the stranger, whom with so much regret she had fancied she was never to see again. It was highly gratifying to find that she was not mistaken in the opinion she had so quickly formed of him ; and she looked forward with impatience to the hour which was to bring him to the Abbey ; her curiosity being powerfully excited to know if the man who had been capable of giving such favourable impressions of himself during a short and casual meeting, would prove equally agreeable upon farther acquaintance.

CHAPTER XV.

CONSTANTIA's desire to be with her sister, made her seize every opportunity of going to Elbourne with company, and there was no person she was more desirous of being there with than Sir Esmond Anson, as she knew that in his presence, Sir Robert was always in perfect good humour.

Sir Esmond's near relationship to Lady Horndon; his age, character, and fortune, made Sir Robert justly consider him as one of the most valuable connexions his family could have, and he therefore omitted no opportunity of ingratiating himself into his favour.

As Constantia knew that Sir Esmond generally went to Elbourne a day or two after he

came to the neighbourhood, she proposed to him the morning after his arrival at Ornvile, that they should pass the next day at Elbourne, to which he very readily assented.

It was her intention to go early in the day, that they might have time to return to the Abbey before dinner, if Sir Robert and Lady Horndon were from home; but unluckily, Sir Esmond, upon his return from Ramsgate, found he should have business at Anson House in the morning, which would put it out of his power to get to Elbourne before three or four o'clock.

This obliged Constantia either to go without him in the morning, or to send to know if Sir Robert and Lady Horndon were to be at home, that Sir Esmond might not risk missing them at a late hour; and she preferred the former, in the hope of getting her sister to make some visits with her in the neighbourhood; she accordingly left Ornvile early, and arrived at Elbourne between eleven and twelve o'clock.

She found Sir Robert and Lady Horndon

alone, in their ordinary sitting room ; she was employed in making a child's frock, and he was lolling in an arm chair in his slippers, with his hair undressed.

After the usual salutations had passed, Sir Robert, addressing Constantia, said, "I cannot congratulate you, Miss Orville, on choosing this morning for a visit to us, as Lady Horndon is in so sulky a humour that you must pass your time very disagreeably."

"I did not imagine," answered Constantia, "that Lady Horndon could be sulky."

"To you," said Sir Robert, "she may not be so, but to me she is less civil; I have been talking to her this hour, and she has hardly deigned to give me an answer."

"The subject of conversation," replied Constantia, "has not, I suppose, been very agreeable."

"Do you, Miss Orville, make it a rule to converse only upon agreeable topics? In your situation this may be practicable, but

how do you think the business of life is to be carried on, if a wife and mother is to be indulged in such freaks?—You have probably, however, never thought of the matter;—women are not oppressed with much thinking;—my wife will sit insipidly a whole day as she does now, drawing a needle through a bit of linen, without troubling herself to think of any thing."

A tear, which glistened in the mild eye of Lady Horndon, roused the feelings of Constantia to such a degree, that she was on the point of giving him a severe answer, when she was prevented by the entrance of her nephew John, who came to inquire if his father would permit him to go to Westbrook with his brother Edward?

"No,—" roared out Sir Robert, in a voice like thunder.

The poor boy, terrified at his father's manner, shrunk back with so piteous a look, that his mother, whom he was near, took him kindly by the hand, and kissed him.

"I beg, Lady Horndon," cried Sir Robert, in a very passionate tone, "that you will not make an ideot of the boy; he will do very well, if left to himself, but nothing can be so ruinous to him as womanish fondling;—mothers, by their ridiculous behaviour, would destroy the spirit of the finest boys in the world."

Lady Horndon quitted her son, and Sir Robert was proceeding with a torrent of invective, when he was interrupted by his son Edward's coming to tell his mother, that Mrs. Oldfield was in her carriage at the lodge, and had sent her servant to say, that if it was convenient to her and his father, she would spend the day with them, after making a call at Mr. Basset's.

Lady Horndon looked at Sir Robert, as if she expected him to direct the answer, upon which he exclaimed, "Is it possible, Lady Horndon, you should be at a loss what to say? Do you imagine I can be troubled with the old fool?"

"What apology shall I make?" said Lady Horndon.

" Any one—no matter what—say you are ill—the children dying—any thing that will frighten her away."

" Her servant inquired," said Edward, " before he delivered the message, how the family were, and was told by Matthew that we were all well."

" How the Devil!" vociferated Sir Robert, " did he pretend to say how we were!"

" Since he did so," said Lady Horndon, " I am afraid we cannot refuse her civilly; I owe her much kindness."

" What infamous folly!" cried Sir Robert, " Go, Sir;" continued he, turning to his son, " and tell Mrs. Oldfield's servant, that your mother is extremely sorry she cannot have the pleasure of seeing his mistress to-day, as I have been much indisposed all the morning."

" By Heavens! Madam," exclaimed Sir Robert, as soon as Edward had left the room, " your absurdity is insupportable!—How

could it enter your brain that I could endure her to-day? Did I not tell you in the morning, that I meant to pass the day in reading? This is a day I had just planned the spending in an easy, snug, comfortable way at home; but to make home agreeable, I should have a wife who has capacity to discern what is right."

Sir Robert stopt a moment, and then broke out with fresh violence against Lady Horn-don,—declaring that nothing could be more disagreeable than visitors, when one was not in a humour for them; and that to-day he could not have patience for the visit of an angel.

"Then," said Constantia, "I must send to prevent Sir Esmond Anson's coming here, who intends to dine with you, if I do not forbid him."

"Sir Esmond Anson!" repeated Sir Robert, with surprise, "when did he come into the country?"

"Two days ago. He is now at Anson House, and I promised to let him know be-

fore two o'clock, if you could not receive him."

"We must certainly receive him;" returned Sir Robert,— "however inconvenient his visit may be, I could not refuse it, unless I were really ill, or had some ostensible apology to offer;—but it would have been civil in you, Miss Orville, if you had condescended to inform us of his intention before we had answered Mrs. Oldfield's message."

"I did not recollect it then," replied Constantia.

"And you think this a sufficient apology, Madam, for throwing us into the most awkward embarrassment? Since Sir Esmond is to be here, it would be the very happiest day for Mrs. Oldfield's visit;—it could not now give us any trouble, and would prevent her plaguing us another time;—was ever anything more horribly provoking!"

"You have yourself to blame for it," returned Constantia; "your anger benumbs my faculties: it is happy for you that I am not your wife."

Sir Robert darted an enraged look at Constantia, and began to reply in a furious manner ; but suddenly checking himself, he turned to Lady Horndon, and in a lowered tone said, “I am sorry now we have refused Mrs. Oldfield’s visit ; I should be sorry to offend her.”

“ I am afraid, indeed,” said Lady Horndon, “ the accepting Sir Esmond’s visit, after refusing hers, would be unlucky.”

“ We must accept of Sir Esmond’s, but do you not think we might still contrive to bring her ?—She cannot yet have left Bafset’s.—Write a note to her, my dear ;—tell her you declined her visit from my having been ill in the morning ; but on my discovering you had done so, I insisted on your intreating her to come, as I was now much better, and could not think of your losing any opportunity of seeing her. Do this, my dear,—add some flummery from yourself, and wheedle her into good humour,—though I wish to God she would keep at home.”

Lady Horndon rose to obey, Sir Robert retired to dress, and Constantia followed her

sister to her dressing-room, where the note was written ; and as soon as it was dispatched, Constantia begged to know if any thing extraordinary had occurred to put Sir Robert out of humour ?

“ Nothing,” answered Lady Horndon ; “ I am ashamed to tell you what a trifle discomposed him : he sat down to breakfast apparently pleased, but the buttered toast happened to be ill done, which put him in a rage, as every trifling disappointment about his food always does. He has since found fault with every thing that has been said, or done ; my endeavours to appease him, he treated as folly,—my silence, he interpreted into sullenness.”

“ Yet you saw he could stifle his resentment at me, though it was very plainly excited.”

“ I acknowledge it,—his children and myself, the dearest objects of his affection, are the sole victims of his temper.”

“ Can you see this, my dear sister, without

seeking a remedy? You promised me that in two or three weeks at farthest, you would come to a final determination."

"I did so, and my resolution is taken; I must submit to his temper for the sake of my children: to them the consequences of our separation might be fatal."

"How often, my dear Fanny, have I said, that for their sakes, you ought not to submit to his behaviour?"

"Convince me but of that, my dear Constantia, and I will instantly propose separation; for I own myself wretched. I live in a state of fear, that almost incapacitates me from doing my duty; though still, I cannot help often wondering I should be so unhappy, when I am in possession of so many blessings."

"Why, my dear sister, will you talk of your blessings, when you are deprived of the power of enjoying them? Other calamities may admit of intervals from pain, but your misfortune allows of none: it is like a drawn

sword suspended over you by a hair, to keep you alive only to fear."

" You are but too right; yet I have consolations which others want. Think of Mrs. Dray,* who suffering every indignity from her husband, though her own conduct is irreproachable, has not even occasionally the company of a friend to soften her distress; he denies her the society of her dearest relations, —even of her excellent father and mother."

" Reflection, Fanny, on Mrs. Dray's afflictions, and those of many other unhappy wives, may aggravate my concern for them, but cannot diminish my sense of your sufferings."

" Life, I fear, Constantia, is much fuller of distress than is commonly supposed; distress for which there is no remedy."

* The various situations, mentioned in the course of this work, in illustration of argument, as the account of Mrs. Dray, Lady Waldeck, Captain Buxton, &c. &c. &c. are a simple statement of facts.

"Many misfortunes are irremediable : but yours are not of the number, as they arise chiefly from allowing your husband to have too much power. It is evident he can govern his temper when he pleases ; and would always do so, if he thought there was any danger of rebellion from you ; but indulgence, and security, aggravate his distemper.—How dangerous is power ! It should never be conferred, without preserving the means of controlling it, if abused."

"I am but too sensible of this, and should not advise my daughter to submit as I have done ; but Sir Robert is now too old to be reformed."

"I am far from thinking so ; however, in so momentous a concern, I will no longer desire you to be influenced by my opinion, but let me entreat that you will at least consult my father. In his counsel you may safely trust ; and I must own, I do not think I shall do my duty either to you or him, if I do not put it in his power to advise you."

"Would you distress him unnecessarily, when I am resolved not to leave my children?"

"Though you do not leave them, they may leave you; your sons certainly will: your two daughters may marry soon, and you may then be left alone with Sir Robert, at an early, period of life, to regret in vain, your not having consulted my father. Against this misfortune, at least, I wish to guard you; for he can make you independent of Sir Robert, by settling an annuity upon you, to take place in the event of your separating from your husband."

"These are views I never thought of."

"They have often occurred to me, who think of your situation by day and by night."

"You are ever good and kind, my dear Constantia; but let me entreat that you will never speak to my father on the subject without my knowledge."

"I shall never speak without your knowledge; but shall certainly do it without your consent, if you are long in giving it."

"Let me first try, once more, to soften his temper by remonstrance."

"I fear you are more likely to make him think you unreasonable, than himself culpable. You have not courage to speak to him as you ought. How unfortunate it is, that your very virtues are a cause of your misery?—If you could summon a little of the shrew into your composition, Sir Robert's tyranny would be at an end."

The conversation was here interrupted, by a verbal message from Mrs. Oldfield, saying, that before she received Lady Horndon's note, she had engaged to spend the day at Mr. Basset's, but that she would certainly be at Elbourne in a day or two.

"How unlucky is this!" said Lady Horndon; "her visit may be the occasion of fresh disturbance."

"Yes," said Constantia, "and so will every

trifle, while Sir Robert is not obliged to restrain his temper; but I shall forbear to trouble you farther on the subject at present."

Constantia then proposed a walk, as it was too late for the visits she intended; and when they went out, she endeavoured to lead her sister's thoughts, as much as possible, to agreeable topics.

CHAPTER XVI.

ABOUT four o'clock Sir Esmond arrived, and was received with the utmost cordiality by Sir Robert, who appeared in the best spirits, and during the afternoon, conversed on a variety of subjects, with the greatest ease and cheerfulness.

In the evening, Lady Horndon having left the room to answer a note, Constantia followed, to have an opportunity of saying a few words to her in private.

"My dear Fanny," said she, "I cannot help wishing before my departure, to observe to you, that from the transactions of this day, you may entertain the most flattering hopes of Sir Robert's amendment, if you will only employ the requisite means for it. Did you

ever see him more agreeable than he has been this afternoon with Sir Esmond? and can you desire a plainer proof of the facility with which he can accommodate himself to circumstances, when he thinks it necessary?—Consider this, my dear sister, and make a vigorous effort for the interest of your family."

Having said this, she left Lady Horndon to write her note; but had no sooner opened the door, than anxiety made her turn and say, "Do not be afraid that I shall ever again urge you to part from your husband;—if I cannot serve, I shall at least cease to harraff you on so painful a subject,—but forgive my saying, now for the last time, that if I do not soon find you are able to effect a change in his temper, nothing shall prevent my making my father acquainted with your situation, who will infallibly separate you from a man, who is so insensible to your merit."

From hearing no sound, Constantia ventured to say this with the door open; but on advancing from it a few steps, she perceived Sir Robert standing in a room adjoining, the door

of which was ajar. From his position, she saw that he could not know he was observed, and she hurried immediately down stairs to the drawing-room, where she found Sir Esmond alone.

She could have no doubt that Sir Robert had distinctly heard her parting address to her sister; but had any uncertainty of it remained, it would have been entirely removed by his behaviour, on his return to the drawing-room.

He brought some prints in his hand to show Sir Esmond, which had been the occasion of his going up stairs, and he endeavoured to behave with his usual ease; but Constantia could plainly perceive the utmost uneasiness, and embarrassment through the whole of his behaviour.

As what he had overheard could afford him no cause of displeasure with her sister, she rejoiced at the accident, as it might be productive of the most beneficial effects, and

could be attended with no bad one, except making her visits disagreeable to him.

She soon after took leave with Sir Esmond; but anxiety about Lady Horndon, would not suffer her to rest the next day, without knowing what effect the discovery Sir Robert had made, had upon him. She returned to Elbourne in the evening, and found her sister alone, Sir Robert having gone to take a ride.

Without giving a hint of the real cause of her concern, she told her that anxiety to know how she did, was the occasion of her visit; upon which Lady Horndon quickly replied, that she rejoiced extremely she had come, as she wished to impart to her a change in the behaviour of Sir Robert, which was not more surprising than agreeable.

"I know not how it happened," said Lady Horndon, "that he was more struck with his conduct yesterday, than he has been on many other occasions, when it was no better; but

however it was, the effect has been happy. After your departure last night, he appeared so thoughtful and gloomy, that I passed the night in misery, terrified for the event;—this morning, however, his aspect was milder, but he took no breakfast, and seemed so unhappy, that I began to fear he was ill, and ventured to express my apprehensions. He made no answer, but did not appear displeased, upon which I again testified concern. He looked surprised,—said he believed I felt more kindness for him than he deserved, and that he would endeavour to correct his unhappy temper. This acknowledgment, with his look and manner, affected me, and I believe my behaviour has made an impression upon him that will confirm his design. This day has passed more agreeably than any I have long known, and certainly, my dear Constantia, I am in a great measure indebted to you for this happy change. When you told him yesterday, that his anger benumbed your faculties, it probably awakened him to a proper sense of his behaviour, for he meets with so little opposition from me, that I believe he is quite unconscious what he has made me suffer."

Constantia expressed the sincerest joy on so fortunate an alteration, whatever might be the cause of it, and soon after took leave, that she might not embarrass Sir Robert by meeting with him.

She determined to conceal carefully from her sister, the accident to which she was indebted for the change in her husband, as the knowledge of it would lessen her satisfaction, without being attended with any advantage; and she returned home, elated with the hope of seeing Lady Horndon's unhappiness alleviated, as she had no doubt Sir Robert's regard for his wife and his reputation, were capable of effecting a considerable reformation in his conduct, when he was convinced that he would otherwise be in danger of losing both.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE day after Sir Esmond Anson had been at Elbourne, he went to Ramsgate, and the following morning returned to Ornvile with Captain Valmonsor.

During two days, which he passed at the Abbey, there was no other visitor there, except Sir Esmond, which gave the family a better opportunity of becoming acquainted with him in that short period, than they might have been in a long series of meetings in mixed companies.

The favourable impressions Constantia had received of him, were not lessened by what she now saw. On subjects of importance he conversed with knowledge and ability; to ordinary topics he had the happy power of

giving a novelty which delighted the imagination,—in her eyes he appeared always to view objects with superior discernment, taste, and feeling.

The state of her mind for some days before his arrival, had prepared her to receive agreeable impressions easily. The affecting situations in which she had been with her father and mother, had given unusual softness to her feelings; the hoped-for improvement in Lady Horndon's state, afforded her peculiar satisfaction, while the presence of Sir Esmond never failed to awaken the sweet affection of a sister, associated with the most grateful and tender recollections of his mother.

Thus situated, with the expectation of seeing at once in Valmonsor, the stranger who had appeared to her so agreeable, and a man of whom she was taught to form the highest opinion, she met him with a satisfaction which almost insured to him the power of pleasing, --and she soon found in his society a new and animating source of pleasure.

The opinion formed of Valmonsor by Sir

John and Lady Ornvile, was scarcely less flattering to him than Constantia's. On his taking leave of them, they earnestly requested that he would be a frequent visitor at the Abbey ; parted from him with regret, and were lavish in his praises to Sir Esmond.

Constantia's thoughts dwelt on Valmonsor, after his departure, and replaced him constantly before her. She recalled to her remembrance all that he had said, and imagined that in him she had seen the companion with whom she should wish to pass her days,—the being her imagination had so often represented, but whom she had despaired of ever seeing.

If she should be so happy as to gain his affection, she thought her fate would be peculiarly fortunate, but with this hope she hardly dared to flatter herself. Were his affections disengaged, was a question which immediately suggested itself? His appearance, she imagined, indicated that they were so ; and she almost believed there was something in his behaviour to herself, which rendered it improbable that he had any predilection for another.

She trusted a little time would terminate her doubts of this, and in the solution of them she promised herself much assistance from Sir Esmond ; but of this hope she was speedily deprived by his telling her he was obliged to return to town in a few days.

Sir Esmond Anson was a young man of fortune, who lived, as most young men of fortune do—idle. At sixteen he had lost his father, who left him so large a property as prevented his thinking of engaging in any professional employment.

To his parents in early life, and afterwards to a brother of his father's, and to Sir John Ornville, who were left his guardians, he was indebted for an excellent education. He was now twenty-seven, and had passed much of his time in the capital, without being tainted by its vices : he lived gaily, without being dissipated : possessed a very pleasing appearance, with engaging manners : was open, candid, and generous ; and had understanding and taste for useful pursuits.

His uncle, Mr. Anson, was an old bache-

lor, who had acquired by commerce a handsome fortune, which he destined for his nephew, to whom he was so much attached that he was never happy when separated from him.

Though he had been sometime withdrawn from business, he had been so long accustomed to live in London, that he continued to reside in, or near it from choice; and declared that he would always do so, unless his nephew married, and settled at Anson House.

Sir Esmond treated him with filial regard, and devoted much time to him, both from gratitude for his kindness, and veneration for his character.

By the Ornvile family, Sir Esmond was extremely beloved, especially by Constantia, who had been much with him in his mother's house.

On his arrival at the Abbey, she expected he was come to remain some weeks, and was filled with regret when she heard him declare his intention of leaving it so soon.

She earnestly urged him to remain, and

her father and mother warmly joined in the request, but he pleaded engagements which obliged him to return to town, while he lamented the Abbey being at such a distance from it, as rendered it impossible for him to be so often with them as he wished.

"Your engagements," said Sir John, "have been of long standing, for you never were before so great a stranger to us. I know of no engagements, which an idle young man like you can have, but with the fair, and therefore I expect, that the next time you visit us, you will be accompanied by Lady Anson."

Sir Esmond replied with a smile, that he did not know how soon he might be induced to marry, but he had no immediate intention of fettering himself.

Constantia, finding he was resolved to depart, was anxious to avail herself of the little time he remained, to obtain all the intelligence she could of Valmonson. She was fearful of putting questions that might betray the interest she took in him; but as she

knew that Sir Esmond had promised to pass another day with him at Ramsgate, she waited impatiently for their meeting being over, in the hope that Sir Esmond would voluntarily mention if Valmonsor had made any remarks on his visit at Orville, by which she could discern the tone of his mind respecting herself.

Sir Esmond did not allow her to remain long in suspense. After his return from Ramsgate, he took the first opportunity he was alone with her, to say, that he believed she had captivated his friend. "He did not tell me so," said Sir Edmund, "but he speaks of you in a way that leaves me no doubt of it; which," added Sir Esmond, smiling, "is the more to be regretted, as I perceive he can have no hope of interesting you in a similar manner. However, I mean to conduct him to you once more. I have invited him to dine here to-morrow, because I could not avoid asking him again before my departure; but were I to remain, I should not encourage his visits, unless you desired it; for they may render him unhappy.—Think of this, my

dear girl, and take care of yourself: I fear he is too poor to marry."

The words, "he is too poor to marry," vibrated on the ear of Constantia, till they awakened her to a full sense of the precipice on which she stood. Hitherto, she had imagined, that she was projecting a union with Valmonsor, as an event, which she was led to wish from judgment, even more than from feeling; but the pang she now felt on fearing she might be obliged to relinquish him for ever, convinced her, that she was rushing precipitately into an attachment, the consequences of which might be fatal.

These reflections made her pass a sleepless unhappy night, and determined her when she met with Valmonsor, to avoid taking so much notice of him as she wished. She was sensible there were many attentions, which to omit, could not offend; yet, to show, might be dangerous: and she hoped, by this prudent behaviour, to guard herself from giving him improper encouragement; to pre-

serve some command over her affections ; and to avoid all occasion for self-reproach.

But Constantia's feelings were now too much interested to permit her to act the part she intended with ease ; and her design, wise as she thought it, was attended with effects, the very reverse of what she expected.

Instead of preserving the ease and cheerfulness of behaviour, which was proper and necessary to avoid observation, her manner was grave and reserved ; and so different from the open cordiality, with which she had treated him on his first visit, that it could not fail to strike a person far less observing than he appeared to be.

He remarked it to Sir Esmond on taking leave of him ; and explained it, by supposing that on his first visit, viewing him only as his friend, she had honoured him with her attention ; but, now, estimating him more by his own merit, she had not thought him worthy of notice.

Sir Esmond repeated this to Constantia with

concern ; adding, “ I should have been glad of your cautious behaviour, my dear Constantia, if it had been less marked ; for I know the generous motive from which it proceeded ; but as I could not explain it to him, I cannot help feeling for the mortification he suffers.”

This speech touched Constantia where she was most vulnerable. To tell her she had wounded the feelings of any person, however indifferent to her, was the most effectual way of exciting her tenderness ; to tell her she had given pain, and appeared capricious to a person she esteemed so highly as Valmonsor, was the infallible means of increasing tenfold the interest she took in him.

Every consideration became now absorbed in anxiety to repair her error ; but to accomplish this appeared a work of difficulty. Sir Esmond was to leave Ornvile the next morning, and it was not probable that Valmonsor would think of returning to it soon. Disapprobation of her behaviour, would destroy the favourable opinion he had been inclined to

entertain of her, and make him wish to avoid meeting with her.—Weeks,—months, she feared might elapse, without her having an opportunity of attempting to repair her misconduct, even supposing that her attempts would not be unsuccessful.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONSTANTIA had passed some time in fruitless anxiety about Valmonson, when fortune favoured her unexpectedly by an interview with him.

Having occasion to make some purchases at Ramsgate, she went thither early in the morning; and, upon alighting from her carriage, saw him approaching.

He accosted her gravely; but the joy she felt on seeing him, made her regardless of his manner; and she addressed him with such visible satisfaction, as soon diminished his reserve.

She endeavoured to engage him in conversation, which the mention of Sir Esmond's departure, gave her an easy opportunity of

doing: she regretted the loss of him both on his own account, and as it might prevent her father and mother from having the pleasure of seeing Captain Valmonsor at Ornville, so often as they might otherwise have done.

He returned her civilities politely, but not with his former ease and frankness, which made her anxious to continue the conversation, till she might hope, she had in some measure, compensated for her past conduct.

She walked with him some time, and though they talked only on trifling subjects, she had at last the satisfaction of seeing his reserve disappear, and his manner become such as it had formerly been.

On taking leave, she requested him, with a look and tone of kindness, to remember, that though Sir Esmond was no longer at Ornville, he had now other friends there, who would be happy to see him, and who would be much disappointed if they had not that pleasure soon.

He answered only by a bow, but with an

expression of countenance, which led her to hope, that her words were not lost on him.

It was not, indeed, easy for her to fail of making an impression where she wished it. She had powerful attractions, though they were those which won by degrees, more than strike at first sight.

Her stature was rather above the middle size, and her person finely formed. She was not entitled to the appellation of a beauty, for her features were not regular, nor her complexion showy; but her teeth were fine, and her eyes beautiful: they were a deep black, and of so fine a form and lustre, that they could not be seen without admiration. But the greatest charm of Constantia was her voice; it was melody, rendered still more impressive by varying so happily with her subject, that the feelings of her hearers accorded almost irresistibly to her words. When her fine eye, beaming with benignity and intelligence, was animated by kindness, which her accents could so feelingly convey, she became one of the most interesting women, to every heart possessed of sensibility.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONSTANTIA returned home in a delightful state of mind. She was not only free from the anxiety to which she had lately been a prey, but from some little circumstances in the behaviour of Valmonsor at Ramsgate, joined to what Sir Esmond had told her, she ventured to hope that she was not indifferent to him. This hope was happiness. She imagined his affection could compensate to her for almost any suffering; or, at least, she believed, that for it she could willingly submit to any misfortune which affected only herself.

A few days had made a great change in her situation. The concern she had suffered for her behaviour to him, had greatly strengthened his power over her; and this last meet-

ing, by leading her to indulge in his presence some portion of the kindness she felt for him, and still more by flattering her with the hope of a return of affection, almost completed the conquest of her heart.

Nothing more generally, or powerfully, wins the favour of individuals, than affection. By flattering self-love, as well as by interesting the amiable feelings of our nature, it seizes on the heart, and too often blinds the understanding. The love or admiration we excite, hardly less than that which we feel, makes us fancy qualities in persons which they do not possess, and throws a veil over the most glaring defects. This is a secret magnet which unites thousands in ties, that would never otherwise have been formed, and of which the cause often appears impenetrable.

When, therefore, to the powerful prepossession Constantia already felt for Valmon-sor, she could join the hope of his love,—the smallest proofs of which are of so fascinating a nature,—it is not surprising that she yielded

almost unresistingly to so delightful an affection.

But though Constantia might feel, she could not act in opposition to her judgment, and she now began seriously to consider what her conduct to Valmonsor should be. The behaviour she had intended to pursue, could never be thought of more. Whatever might be the consequence, she was determined that she would never again treat him differently from what she had done on his first visit at Ornville ; but she believed that it would not be difficult to prevent their having frequent meetings ; and even imagined, as the Abbey was generally full of company in summer, that she might sometimes see him there without conversing with him, yet without appearing to avoid him.—In fine, she thought it possible, by care, to prevent any intercourse that could be hazardous, yet without doing any thing which could hurt his feelings, or occasion herself regret.

It remained, however, to be considered, whether she should attempt this ; and thus,

by arresting the progress of their affection, avert the distresses which might arise from it, or whether she ought to encourage it with a view to a permanent union.

To a union with Valmonsor various objections appeared ; the force of which she endeavoured to investigate thoroughly.

The first, was his want of fortune. Sir Esmond had said he was poor ; but supposing he had only his commission, she thought her own fortune sufficient for both, if his wishes could be as moderate as hers.

Her father had given Lady Horndon five thousand pounds ; she could not, therefore, expect less from him. Lady Anson had left her four thousand, which having been allowed to accumulate, was now about five ; and on ten thousand pounds she thought it very possible for Valmonsor and herself to be independent and happy. Want of fortune, therefore, appeared no objection.

But a great one was his profession, from

which a train of incalculable evils might arise ; yet ought the chance of distresses, which might never occur, to outweigh the extraordinary merit of Valmonsor ?—Could she expect to enter the married state with every advantage, or ought she selfishly to relinquish him from the apprehension of dangers, which rendered him more interesting ?

The last, and most formidable obstacle to their union, was the opposition of her friends, who would be disappointed in her marrying a man without fortune, and who possessed none of the external advantages which are so generally prized. But was it certain that her father and mother, who were the persons to be chiefly considered, would not be influenced by the same motives, which guided her ? She flattered herself that her father would not materially differ from her in opinion ; and at all events, should either he, or her mother, oppose her design, she believed it would be infinitely less painful to renounce Valmonsor hereafter for their sakes, than to lose him by any other means.

After revolving frequently in her mind the various circumstances of Valmonsor's situation and her own, she at length determined that she would take no measures to avoid him, and leave the event to fate. She feared he might have objections to her, which she did not suspect; but if he had, it was to be supposed his conduct would be guided accordingly, and if either indifference or prudence, should lead him to act otherwise than she wished, she would then endeavour to overcome her affection for him.

She now waited impatiently for his return to Ornville, and she did not wait long. He came one morning when her father was going to take an airing on horseback, who very kindly invited him to accompany him, on condition that he would return and pass the day at the Abbey; Lady Ornville and Constantia joined in the request, to which Valmonsor, with much cheerfulness, consented.

Upon his return, Sir Thomas and Lady Vyner, two old friends of Sir John and Lady Ornville's, arrived, who so far engaged their attention, as to leave Valmonsor sometimes at

liberty to converse apart with Constantia, and these opportunities, though few, sufficed to improve their acquaintance.

Her whole behaviour to him was flattering, for still remembering with regret her former reserve, and led now, both by judgment and feeling, to compensate for it, she omitted no attention which a delicate sense of propriety would permit, and she had the satisfaction to perceive that his feelings seemed in unison with her own. He appeared less gay, but not less happy than on his first visit; and she thought she could plainly discern in his behaviour, marks of feeling, which gave her almost the conviction of his affection.

On his departure, it was with inexpressible pleasure that she heard her father speak of him to Sir Thomas and Lady Vyner with the warmest approbation; while her mother observed, that he was so agreeable, it was impossible to part from him without regret.

In this regret Constantia hardly participated, for she was so happy in the belief of his love, that all other feelings were absorbed in the de-

light it afforded her, and she passed several days with scarcely any anxiety for his return.

“ La plupart des plaisirs ont besoin, pour être sentis, de la présence de l'objet. La musique, la bonne chere, les spectacles, il faut que ces plaisirs soient présent pour faire leur impression, pour rappeller l'ame à eux, et la tener attentive. Nous avous en nous une disposition à les goûter ; mais ils sont hors de nous, ils viennent des dehors. Il n'en est pas de même de l'amour ; il est chez nous, il est une portion de nous memes ; il ne tient pas seulement a l'objet, nous en jouissons sans lui. Cette joie de l'ame que donne la certitude d'être aimée, ces sentimens tendres et profonds, cette émotion de cœur vive et touchante, que vous donnent l'idée et le nom de la personne que vous aimez ; tout ces plaisirs sont en nous, et tiennent à notre propre sentiment. Quand votre cœur est bien touche, et que vous êtes sûre d'être aimée, tous vos plus grands plaisirs sont dont votre amour : vous pouvez donc être heureuse par votre seul sentiment, et associer ensemble le bonheur et l'innocence.”

Charmed with her situation, Constantia ventured to anticipate her union with Valmonsor, as almost certain. To her sanguine imagination, the road to happiness lay not only open, but smooth and uninterrupted; persuaded of Valmonsor's love, and of her father and mother's approbation of him, she fancied a few weeks might secure to her on her journey through life, a companion with whom she might expect every comfort which personal merit and affection could bestow; but Constantia was yet in the infancy of love; she did not know that it was the nature of the passion to create misery to itself, and that she was destined to suffer misfortunes, of which she could not then form the smallest idea.

CHAPTER XX.

AFTER a short absence, Valmonsor returned to Ornville. He appeared uncommonly serious, but as he was not otherwise different from what he had formerly been, Constantia was not alarmed by his gravity, and hoped it might be in some degree owing to the same cause which had of late considerably diminished the gaiety of her own disposition.

A large company happened to be at the Abbey, which separated her from him during the greater part of the day, and rendered the conversation very general till the evening, when he had an opportunity of taking a seat by her.

The conversation at dinner had turned on the misfortunes of a Mr. Westcotte, who

having unexpectedly suffered a heavy loss of fortune by the failure of a banker, was reduced from affluence to a state of comparative poverty. The distress and situation of his wife, on this reverse of fortune, had been minutely described and lamented by some of the company.

Valmonsor began conversation with Constantia, by asking if she was acquainted with Mrs. Westcotte?

"Not intimately," she replied, "but I have seen her often."

"Her misfortunes are heavy," said Valmonsor; "though I think it was said that her husband has still a competency?"

"He has," returned Constantia; "what many would think such; but I fear Mrs. Westcotte has been so long accustomed to affluence, that she will consider herself at present in a state of extreme poverty."

"Poverty and affluence," said Valmonsor, "are, no doubt, relative terms; and Mrs.

Westcotte may, therefore, well be excused for suffering so severely as she does from her change of situation."

"I am far from condemning her," replied Constantia," yet it may be regretted, if with the comforts of life still in posseſſion, she should allow herself to sink into misery, merely from the loss of wealth. Many could be happy in her situation ; but I suspect Mrs. Westcotte estimates things more through the medium of other peoples' judgment, than her own."

"How can she do otherwise? Our consequence in society depends on the opinion of others."

"But our happiness does not altogether depend on our place in society. I am persuaded Mrs. Westcotte might still be happy, if she could rise superior to the mortifications of vanity."

"Is such philosophy to be expected from a young woman?"

"I know not," answered Constantia, with a

smile, “what philosophy may be expected from young women; but, if reason cannot, self-interest should, perhaps, teach Mrs. Westcotte not to lose the solid advantages of life, in unavailing regret for the showy appendages of fortune.”

“Supposing,” said Valmonsor, “that Mrs. Westcotte were superior to vanity, there may be other causes for her suffering severely, the loss of wealth; custom, for example, is so powerful, that it can make us feel acutely the loss of things, which in possession we did not value.”

“Certainly,” replied Constantia; “Mrs. Westcotte must suffer from a variety of causes; I only meant to observe that her misfortunes may unhappily be aggravated by a false estimate of good and ill.”

“However we may estimate things,” returned Valmonsor, “there is perhaps no person who could sustain so great a reverse of fortune with perfect firmness. Do you, Miss Ornville, know any one who could at once forego the enjoyments of affluence with tranquillity?”

"I know not if I do ; it might be rash, at least, to presume on any persons' strength in such a case ; for we may fancy individuals equal to vicissitudes, which, upon trial, they might sink under."

Valmonsor made no reply ; and upon Constantia's attempting to draw him again into conversation, he gave her slight answers, and appeared lost in thought, till he was roused by a lady's asking, if she was going to the afsembly at Ramsgate ?

After she had answered in the negative, and replied to some trifling questions about a ball to which she was invited, Valmonsor asked if she was fond of dancing ?

"Moderately taken," she replied, "I think it very agreeable."

"Is moderation in amusement easily defined ?"

"Perhaps not ; you might think my dancing immoderate."

"Is there any amusement of which you

think yourself immoderately fond? Music, for example,—would you not go a hundred miles at any time to hear a fine concert?"

"The music I would go a hundred miles to hear, I should not consider as amusement; fine music is more."

"Is there no amusement," said Valmonsor, smiling, "to which you would sacrifice? Is every thing you do, 'wisest, virtuousest, discretest, best.'"

"Stop," cried Constantia, gaily, "you will force me to accuse myself, that I may avoid the appearance of affectation;—shall I give you a list of my foibles?"

"Begin."

"First then; an immoderate passion for theatrical entertainments."

Constantia said this with a smile; and partly with a view of engaging him in a conversation on the subject of the stage; but her cheerfulness was suddenly checked by his gravity; he relapsed almost instantaneously

into his former absence, and seemed for some minutes unconscious that she expected him to speak ;—recovering at length, he abruptly asked, if she had been much in town ?

“ Only twice,” she answered ; “ for a few months in spring.”

“ You were no doubt much delighted with it ?”

“ I was, at least, much entertained. It is a universe, which I should be sorry not to have seen, but it did not make Ornville less agreeable :—I may go thither for amusement, but should always return home for happiness.”

Again Valmonsor became melancholy and absent, and while Constantia was regarding him with anxiety, some of the company rose to depart, and in a few minutes only two visitors, besides himself, remained.

Lady Ornville immediately proposed cards ; and Valmonsor having declined playing, Sir John and Lady Ornville, with their other guests, sat down to a rubber at whist.

As soon as they were engaged, Valmonsor asked Constantia, if she had any objection to a walk?

She answered readily that she had none, and immediately getting her bonnet, they went out.

They walked silently for some minutes, till Constantia pulling a small flower offered it to him, saying,

“ If thou cans’t no charms disclose,
“ In the simplest bud that blows;”

“ Would to heaven!” cried Valmonsor, with a sigh, “ I could discover no charms in them! I never see a rural scene without lamenting my fate. How happy a lot is your father’s. In this enchanting place, remote from the bustle and corruptions of the world,—secure of every domestic comfort, he can indulge his taste; and enjoy, without alloy, all the blessings of life.”

“ Constantia offered no reply to a speech which touched a very painful string.

After a pause, Valmonsor renewed the conversation by asking if she was fond of a country life ?

"I think it," replied she, "the most favourable to happiness : I should like to travel for a time, but should certainly wish my home amid the tranquil scenes of life."

" You must then, think my situation very unfortunate, which can neither afford the true advantages of travelling, nor the pleasures of retirement."

" Place," said Constantia, chagrined at the application, "is of very little consequence to happiness."

" I thought," replied Valmonsor, " it was of the utmost ; what then constitutes happiness?"

" That question," returned Constantia, " may be answered by every person differently."

" I wish to know your definition of happiness."

"Mine," replied she, "is placed in the society of those I love, and in the exercise of employments from which I may derive the consciousness of being useful."

"Again I must observe," said Valmonson, "how much my situation is the reverse of every thing you think happy. A soldier's life admits of little choice of society, and of its usefulness I am far from being satisfied.—There are times, indeed, in which a man may be nobly employed in defence of his country; but how few wars are undertaken on that principle? and in time of peace, how many of a soldier's days must pass insignificantly?"

"Where there is mind," said Constantia, "time can never pass insignificantly."

"You, Madam, can form no idea of the uncomfortable life of a soldier, who, on a narrow income, is driven from one disagreeable station to another, without society, without books, or almost any means of satisfaction,—condemned to prove,

"Of all the ills unhappy mortals know,
"A life of wand'ring is the greatest wo."

"But why," said Constantia, "has a soldier no means of satisfaction? May he not have domestic comfort?"

"Domestic comfort!" exclaimed Valmonsor, "what domestic comfort can a soldier have? Should a soldier of fortune marry! Should he drag a woman from a situation in which she may enjoy all the comforts of life, to expose her to its hardships?—Would not you, Miss Orville," continued he, stopping her abruptly, and fixing his eyes intently on her face, "condemn a man for marrying, who has it not in his power to secure to his wife, all the comforts which female delicacy may require?"

This question, eagerly put, disconcerted Constantia; the consciousness of her own wishes, with the earnestness of his manner, embarrassed her, and she could not immediately command sufficient presence of mind to frame a proper reply. When she did recollect herself it was too late;—at the moment she was going to speak, Valmonsor's countenance changed from an expression of strong

anxiety to deep melancholy; and turning away, as if he ceased to expect an answer, he walked thoughtfully on.

His appearance immediately discovered to Constantia, that her silence was unfortunate. She had little doubt that his question was meant as a trial of her sentiments respecting himself, and that he interpreted her silence as a kind of repulse. She would have given worlds to renew the conversation, but the peculiarity of his behaviour, and the poignancy of her own feelings, rendered her incapable of attempting it;—she was forced to remain silent, though conscious that every moment she did so, served to confirm his mistake.

After walking silently a few minutes, he began to speak on a trifling subject, at the same time that he turned into a path, which led directly to the house, the door of which they had scarcely reached, before he proposed bidding her farewell.

Constantia, a little recovered from her em-

barrafsment, and miserable from her misconduct, earnestly requested him to stay all night at the Abbey, but her solicitations were vain ; he entreated her to excuse him, declaring it was not in his power,—and hardly would he permit her to remain with him, till his horse was brought.

While they waited for it neither of them spoke,—her unhappiness every moment increased, and misery seemed stamped on his countenance ; he stood at some distance without looking at her, and when his horse came, bowed mournfully without speaking, and departed.

Constantia followed him with her eye, till she could no longer discern him, and in the moment that he was lost to her view, felt as if the whole world had vanished from her sight ; —her heart sunk in despair ;—her joyful prospects were now closed,—closed by herself at the instant that fortune had put her fate in her own power.

Overcome by these reflections, she remained long leaning against the door of the house, unconscious of surrounding objects, till the sound of footsteps awakened her recollection ; she then retired to her own apartment to endeavour to regain some composure before she should meet with her father and mother.

CHAPTER XXI.

WHEN time had permitted Constantia to reflect fully on all the circumstances of Valmonsor's behaviour, she began to hope, that though he had fallen into a mistake, it might not be impossible to undeceive him ; and that now she was prepared for his peculiar mode of addressing her, she might be able to convince him either directly, or indirectly, that he had no obstacles to apprehend, from her at least, to their union.

This hope softened her sorrow, and enabled her to assume an appearance of tranquillity in company ; but in private she was tortured in contriving expedients to undeceive him, and with fears of their proving unsuccessful.

Soon, however, a new distress occurred ; Valmonsor seemed resolved to afford her no

opportunity of exercising her ingenuity, for weeks elapsed without his revisiting the Abbey. She had hoped that whatever he might intend respecting herself, politeness to her father and mother would bring him to Ornville ; but she now began to fear he was determined to avoid her, and under this apprehension her spirits became hourly more depressed.

In this state of miserable anxiety, the only consolation she experienced was the seeing she was not disappointed in the hopes she had indulged of an improvement in her sister's situation.

Sir Robert's temper had been considerably meliorated ; and Lady Horndon believing the change proceeded entirely from remorse, was rendered so happy by it, that an extraordinary alteration appeared in her. Her spirits gradually recovered their naturally cheerful tone, which occasioned so great an improvement in her appearance and conversation, that Sir Robert, struck with the change, inquired what cause he was to attribute the transformation ?

She acknowledged it was solely owing to the alteration which had lately taken place in him ; that she had never seen him so tranquil and cheerful, and that nothing had ever been wanting to produce the change he observed in her, but the seeing him happy. He appeared much struck by her words,—confessed he had often wantonly destroyed her happiness, and thrown away his own ; but that, henceforth, it should be his earnest endeavour to govern completely his irritable disposition.

When Lady Horndon informed Constantia of this, she added, that she was convinced he now found his own happiness, as well as hers, so much improved by the change in his behaviour, that he would never again indulge his temper in the manner he had formerly done ; and that she could see the habit of restraint had such an effect in lessening his propensity to irritation, that she might hope he would, in a little while feel no self-command necessary.

Constantia encouraged her hopes, and became more than ever determined never to lessen her comfort, by allowing her to have

the slightest suspicion that his reformation had been effected by fear. She believed he might now, very probably, be induced to govern his temper from a variety of motives; and satisfied for the present, with the happy change in her sister's situation, she contented herself with knowing, that she had the means of reclaiming him in her power, should he again relapse into his former tyranny.

But while she rejoiced in his behaviour for her sister's sake, she became more than ever disgusted with his character; since she saw that selfish fear could in an instant operate with infinitely more power upon his conduct, than either affection or humanity for the amiable and helpless beings, whose peace was dependent upon him.

CHAPTER XXII.

CONSTANTIA was beginning to be in total despair of seeing Valmonsor, when one morning, as she was sitting alone, she had the satisfaction of hearing him announced. She trembled with agitation as he approached, and his pale countenance, with the melancholy visible in his appearance, did not tend to restore her tranquillity.

After the first compliments had passed, she regretted his absence, which he apologised for on the score of indisposition ; adding, that if he could obtain leave of absence, it was his intention to leave Ramsgate, and make a tour for his health.

Constantia could not hear of his illness with-

out concern ; but his intended departure she felt as the final destruction of her hopes. She made no attempt to reply, but she could not entirely conceal her emotion ; her eyes filled with tears, and her whole appearance testified her concern.

Valmonsor regarded her for a moment with evident surprise, but suddenly averting his face, he leaned his arm on the back of his chair, and pressed his hand to his forehead.

They had remained in this state a few moments, when Lady Ornville entered. As they were at a distance from the door, they had time to recover a little before she approached, when Valmonsor again pleaded indisposition as an apology for his absence.

She politely regretted the loss of his company, and the cause of it ; adding, that she hoped he was now come with the intention of spending the day with them, which would give Sir John and herself much pleasure.

He did not consent to remain without hesi-

tation, though Constantia thought he appeared less melancholy than at first; and as he continued to converse with her mother, she had the satisfaction of seeing him gradually assume a more serene appearance.

To whatever cause this was to be attributed, she was beginning to derive much pleasure from it, and to hope that she might yet have an opportunity of obtaining the éclaircissement she wished, when her situation was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of two ladies. They were Miss Hargraves, nieces of Lady Orville, who, with a younger sister, resided at Oak Hill, three miles distant; and this was the first time they had been at the Abbey, since their return from a visit, which had detained them above two months from home.

They were welcomed by Lady Orville with great kindness; but they were not received with pleasure by Constantia, who knowing the second sister, Harriet, to be a very attractive, and most artful coquet, could not see her in the presence of Valmonsor, without terror.

The arrival of her father soon after, afforded her some relief, by his engaging the attention of Valmonsor, who, during the day, conversed much with Sir John, and seemed desirous to devote himself to him, as far as politeness to the rest of the company would permit.

To Constantia he did not appear studious of good breeding, sedulously avoiding any attention to her,—hardly ever addressing her in conversation, or glancing his eye where she was.

This behaviour she did not regret, as it prevented the state of her mind, with regard to him, from being discovered by the basilisk eyes of Harriet Hargrave, on whose arrival, she had given up all hope of conversing with him to any advantage.

The indifference with which he appeared to regard Harriet, did not lessen her fear of so formidable a rival; for she every moment dreaded, that his admiration would at length be excited by her powerful attractions, and

she now experienced, what a few hours before she had believed impossible, that the presence of Valmonsor was capable of rendering her more miserable than his absence.

Harriet observed the distinction with which he was treated by Sir John and Lady Ornville, and in a low voice inquired of Constantia who he was ; adding, that he was one of the most agreeable men she had ever seen.

She paid a flattering attention to all that he said, addressed herself frequently to him ; and, in the evening, when they were about to depart, contrived to engage him to accompany her and her sister on their ride home, Oak Hill being only a mile out of the straight road to Ramsgate.

Constantia saw them depart with the utmost uneasiness ; for though she thought herself at the instant assured of his affection, yet she could not tell what the arts of a coquet might effect with a man, whose intention it evidently was to give her up. She knew that Harriet

could employ infinite address in gaining admirers, and that her situation was extremely favourable to her designs. She possessed an independent fortune, without any relations or friends to put any restraint on her conduct; and if she should be so fortunate as to attract the regard of Valmonsor, there could be no obstacles to prevent his addressing her.

Tormented by these reflections, she passed a wretched night, and in the morning determined to go to Oak Hill, and confide her distresses to her youngest cousin, Louisa Hargrave, from whom she was certain of receiving all the consolation friendship could give, and by whom she might expect to be regularly informed of Harriet's proceedings with Valmonsor.

Louisa Hargrave was a year older than Constantia, and her favourite friend. She seemed one of the favourites of fortune, for with an amiable disposition and good understanding, she possessed an agreeable appearance, and independent fortune, without having apparently any circumstance in her situation,

which could interrupt the ease and gaiety of life ; yet Louisa was far from enjoying the peace her situation seemed to indicate, which was chiefly owing to her sisters, who were very different from herself.

Their father was the only brother of Lady Ornvile. He had been dead about ten years, and had left a widow, and four daughters, to each of whom he bequeathed fourteen thousand pounds. Two years before his death his eldest daughter had been married to Captain Elford, of the navy.

Mrs. Hargrave being in bad health and spirits after the death of her husband, lived in great retirement during the seven years that she survived him ; and upon her death, her three unmarried daughters were induced by Lady Ornvile to leave Cornwall, where they had hitherto resided, and settle in Kent.

She wished to have them near her, and they were no less desirous of quitting a dull, for a gay situation. She, therefore, proposed their living at Oak Hill, the proprietor of which

having lately succeeded to an estate in another county, was desirous of letting it. In many respects, particularly from its vicinity to Ornvile, it appeared so desirable a residence for her nieces, that, without any hesitation, they acquiesced in her proposal, and fixed their abode at Oak Hill.

They had now lived three years there with great satisfaction, as they found it happily suited to their views. Their fortune did not permit their living in London, which would have been agreeable to Harriet, and none of them wished to reside in an inferior town. They liked the country; found Oak Hill a convenient residence for occasional excursions to Bath and London; they had an agreeable circle of society in the neighbourhood, and from their vicinity to Ramsgate and Margate, had opportunities of seeing a variety of company, and partaking a little in public amusements.

Miss Hargrave, whose name was Prudence, was thirty-one; plain in her person and understanding, and unfortunate in her temper,

but of a humane disposition, with good principles.

Harriet was twenty-four, and was a woman of singular character and endowments. She possessed an excellent capacity and quick apprehension, which enabled her to seize with facility any idea that was presented to her mind; but being extremely deficient in solidity and taste, she was incapable of forming opinions for herself, and always adopted the sentiments of the persons she particularly liked or admired.

Yet the weakness of her judgment was only suspected by a few, who had much opportunity of knowing her, for she expressed her opinions with a clearness, and generally asserted them with a firmness, that gave her the appearance of thinking for herself.

Her disposition did not appear bad, where her interest was not particularly concerned; but the violence of her passions, which her principles were far from being adequate to controul, made her a more dangerous mem-

ber of society than women of worse dispositions.

Her strongest passion was the love of admiration ; the most fatal that can engage the mind of women, who, acting in a limited sphere, are naturally led to seek its gratification in paths most destructive to the peace of individuals.

Extremely cheerful and good tempered, with an appearance uncommonly elegant, and a mind highly cultivated, Harriet Hargrave was formed to command the admiration she wished ; but her ambition was not limited to the conquest of lovers. She was solicitous of praise from persons of every description, of all ages, and both sexes, which secured her from the suspicion of coquetry ; for she was so universally beloved and admired, that the number of her lovers, though often the effect of the deepest design, was considered as the unavoidable consequence of her rare qualities and captivating manners.

There was no avenue to admiration of

which she did not endeavour to avail herself. She read, but it was not from taste. She saw the high place in society to which literary knowledge would exalt her, and she, therefore, patiently investigated volumes, which otherwise she would never have opened. From the same motive she was fond of conversation ; she loved it as a mean, not as an end ; deprive her of the hope of exciting admiration in her auditors, and her pleasure in conversation would be nearly destroyed ; but the satisfaction she appeared to take in it, and in reading, gave her the reputation of possessing superior taste for both.

Her talents and knowledge enabled her to converse on most subjects readily ; and she was cautious of speaking of any she was unacquainted with, till she heard the sentiments of others, whose judgment she respected. She listened to them with deference, slid quietly into their opinions, and repeated them, often dressed to such advantage in her own language, that she became distinguished for observations, which were not her own. This facility in discerning, and adopting what

was excellent, was productive of the highest gratification to her vanity; for though she was conscious, that she often shone with borrowed lustre, she was not the less pleased with the homage she received:—the mistaken praise, which pride would have disdained, vanity made her eagerly swallow; and she exulted in the address, with which she adopted the offspring of others.

But of all the modes of gaining the favour of individuals, there was none she practised with more skill and success than flattery,—a delicate bewitching flattery, which made even the persons about whom she was indifferent, fancy themselves the objects of her admiration or regard. Nor did this adulation, though liberally bestowed, draw upon her the imputation of being a flatterer; praise seemed to flow from her spontaneously, and as she took care never to flatter any person in the presence of another, no one suspected that what was given to them, was bestowed upon others. Thus, almost all her acquaintance became her friends; they were conscious of her powers, charmed by her manners, and flattered by her regard,—

and joined in her praises, hardly more from admiration than self-love : for the higher the general testimony rose in her favour, the higher they found themselves exalted by her esteem.

Such was the woman whom Constantia now dreaded as a rival. In vain did she endeavour to console herself by reflecting on the place she believed she possessed in the affections of Valmonsor ; his partiality for her was yet of short duration ;—it might be lost in admiration of more brilliant attractions,—or he might even be entangled in the snares of Harriet Hargrave, although his heart preferred another ; instances of which she had already seen in the triumphs of Harriet.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WITH a heavy heart Constantia went to Oak Hill, where she had the good fortune to find Louisa alone, who was confined to the house by a cold, which had prevented her accompanying her sisters the day before to Ornville.

They were extremely rejoiced to meet again, after a separation to which they were unaccustomed, and they were hardly less happy at meeting so quietly, as it afforded them an opportunity for unreserved conversation.

They had not conversed long before Constantia inquired, if Valmonsor had stopped at Oak Hill the preceding evening, when he attended her sisters home?

"He was here," replied Louisa, "about half an hour, and will probably repeat his visit soon; for both my sisters were so much pleased with him, that they earnestly invited him to return. They are gone to Ramsgate this morning, and I suspect that he is the magnet that drew Harriet thither; for she suddenly urged Prudence to make a visit there to-day, which yesterday they had agreed to postpone till next week."

This intelligence did not lessen the unhappiness of Constantia, who informed Louisa of the interest she took in Valmonsor; gave her the history of her acquaintance with him, and concluded her recital by expressing her fear of Harriet as a rival.

Louisa sympathised in her distresses with all the warmth of genuine friendship, and endeavoured to persuade her, that Valmonsor's acquaintance with Harriet, was only to be regretted on account of the anxiety it might occasion her.

"The man," said Louisa, "who is once your lover, must always be so, if he is worthy

of your esteem, and you do not send him from you by indifference ; neither are your attractions of a kind to be rivalled by others, nor have you failings to counteract their effects."

" Supposing, for a moment," replied Constantia, " that your opinion of me was not the offspring of the most partial regard, yet it could not give me confidence in the continuance of his affection. I find reason of no avail in governing my fears ; my opinions respecting him are in perpetual fluctuation ; one moment I am convinced of his regard,—the next I believe it impossible, and wonder how I could ever entertain so imaginary an idea. A few weeks ago it was otherwise ; I was then ignorant, or weak enough to persuade myself of his affection, and to believe that I was treading a flowery path, in which there were no thorns."

" Of his affection," said Louisa, " you cannot have a doubt ; his behaviour will admit of no other interpretation, of which you must soon be convinced : he is at present act-

ing under a mistake, which a little time will correct."

"I know not how it can be removed," replied Constantia.

"I am sorry," said Louisa, "looking through the window, "that our conversation must be interrupted; I see my sisters are returned, and with them the man I least wish to meet.—Oh! Constantia, you know not what it is to be obliged to affect indifference, when the heart beats with affection."

"Have you seen Tresilian since your return?"

"Yes, he called here this morning, and accompanied my sister to Ramsgate: I suppose he is not less devoted to Harriet than formerly."

In a moment the door opened, and Miss Hargrave entered, followed by Harriet, and Mr. Tresilian.

They were hardly in the room before Miss Hargrave exclaimed, "Do you know, Miss

Ornville, that Miss Nott has run off to Gretna Green with Mr. Thorncliffe!"

"I am very sorry," answered Constantia, "that she has been obliged to take such a step."

"Obliged!" cried Miss Hargrave, "do you speak of an elopement in so gentle a style?"

"I should have thought it unpardonable," replied Constantia, "if, notwithstanding her independent fortune, her mother had not endeavoured to compel her to marry Mr. Rockwood."

"And a most excellent match he would have been for her!" returned Miss Hargrave.

"How excellent?" asked Harriet.

"How!" repeated Miss Hargrave, "don't you know that he has a very capital fortune, and one of the prettiest seats in the county? There is the finest prospect from his drawing-room I ever saw."

"And her prospect of comfort in it with him," said Harriet, "was enchanting. He is the most insufferable kind of animal I know; a mere country squire, whose greatest amusements are hunting and cock-fighting: the being a cock-fighter is to me a full account of a man's perfections."

"I have known very good men, who were cock-fighters," said Miss Hargrave.

"What rarities!" cried Harriet; "did you ever know a respectable man, who was a cock-fighter?"

"Are not most country gentlemen sportsmen?" asked Miss Hargrave.

"Does that question, my dear Prudence, convey a panegyric upon sportsmen, or a sarcasm upon country gentlemen?—There is some strange want of taste about me; I have no relish for the science of cocks and dogs:—Rockwood, I believe, can speak of nothing else."

"Have you never," said Tresylian, "heard him and his sisters speak of their neighbours?"

"O true," cried Harriet, "I had forgot their talents in that way. They know the private history and transactions of every family in the county, and are always talking of them."

"Can any thing," said Miss Hargrave, "be more natural than to talk of one's neighbours?"

"Nothing," answered Harriet, "if we may judge from its being the favourite topic with most families: the tittle tattle one hears about people is insupportable!"

"Eye, Harriet!" cried Miss Hargrave, "how can *you* complain of tattle, who listen to it so patiently?"

"My dear Prue, am I not to disapprove of any thing, which politeness may oblige me to submit to? How many families, pray, should I visit, if I could not practise a little patience in listening to tattle?"

"When people are not ill-natured," replied Miss Hargrave, "they should be excused for talking of their acquaintance."

"If they were only ill-natured," said Harriet, "they might, perhaps be excusable; for scandal may be necessary to gratify the malignity of our nature; but the dulness and meanness, which often lead people to talk of their neighbours, occasion the most insufferable details. How long will Mrs. Larum harangue about Lady Ashton's income; her birth and relatives,—the number of her servants,—the time of her breakfasting, dining and supping; with all the insignificant particulars, which ignorance and folly can combine to degrade conversation?"

"Harriet!" said Miss Hargrave, indignantly, "you are *quite intolerable!*"

"Well," replied Harriet, "we shall say no more of Mrs. Larum at present. We have wandered strangely from Miss Nott; pray, Mr. Tresilian, do you know any thing of Thorncliffe?"

"I know him," said Tresilian, "to be a very amiable, sensible man, but without any of the nominal advantages, which, in the lan-

guage of the world, constitute a good marriage ; ”

“ I am charmed with her choice,” cried Harriet,

“ Wisdom, and worth were all he had,

“ But these were all to me.”

“ And a mother’s approbation is nothing ! ” said Miss Hargrave, scornfully.

“ Her mother should have considered her happiness.”

“ Happiness,” retorted Miss Hargrave, “ is a very romantic idea ; it should never be thought of, for it is never to be found.”

“ I am persuaded there is a great deal of it in the world,” returned Harriet. “ What is your opinion, Mr. Tresilian ? This is a subject on which Prudence and I are always differing.”

“ It is a subject,” answered Tresilian, “ upon which so many have differed, that I have long ceased to discuss it ; however, my opinion is, that the misery of the world far exceeds the happiness.”

"How then," said Louisa, "do you account for the ease and cheerfulness apparent in so many people?"

"By the necessity of exertion; the business of life must be carried on; and active employments, with good health, will often give an appearance of tranquillity which is far from being felt; but I have seen too many "look gay and smile against their conscience," to put any trust in appearances."

"Do you think with Rochefoucault," rejoined Louisa, "that whatever difference may appear in men's fortunes, there is nevertheless a compensation which renders all equal?"

"I am of a very different opinion. The compensation may often be greater than appears; but that there is a vast inequality in the lot of individuals, I am perfectly convinced. In the quietest times I should think this incontrovertible, but at present, the examples of it are unfortunately so numerous, that I cannot imagine how the contrary can be maintained.

"There is not, however, I suppose," said Constantia, "any person either so happy as not to have some shade in their lot, or so unfortunate as to be without consolation."

"I am doubtful of that," returned Tresilian; "there are probably few so happy as to have been wholly exempted from affliction; but I have certainly known some so uniformly unfortunate, as never to have enjoyed comfort. But you, ladies, have little opportunity of knowing the evils of life; blessed with health, peace, and competence, your days glide smoothly along, unruffled by a care;—but inquire into the history of others,—examine their situations at home, where the veil which conceals them from the public eye is withdrawn, and I believe you will find, that the majority of mankind are the prey of distress, real or imaginary."

"The examination will make us all miserable," said Harriet; "let us defer it to another time."

"Then," said Constantia, rising, "I shall not be sorry to interrupt the conversation."

"Will your departure make us less miserable?" asked Harriet.

"Why depart," said Miss Hargrave; "I had hoped you were come to spend the day with us."

"I am very sorry," returned Constantia, "that it is not in my power."

"You mean to convince us," said Tresilian, "that even the blessings of life may be productive of regret."

"To be so regretted," she replied, "almost compensates to me the pain of departing."

She then took leave, and was accompanied by Tresilian.

Tresilian was a man of fortune in the neighbourhood, whom Louisa had met with about six months before, when she was on a visit at Larchwood, the seat of Mr. Warrington. Till then he had been a stranger to the Hargrave family, having been little in Kent, since they fixed their residence at Oak Hill;

but, during the few weeks he passed with Louisa at Larchwood, he appeared so much attracted by her, that she hoped the rising affection she felt for him, would soon be confirmed by his avowed attachment to her.

In this expectation she returned to Oak Hill, where he became immediately a visitor, and at first behaved to her with the same flattering attention he had shown at Larchwood; but after a short time, she began to fear that Harriet had rivalled her in his affections.

Tresilian was too agreeable, and held too high a place in the world both from character and fortune, not to be a desirable conquest for Harriet; but Louisa had flattered herself that Harriet would easily perceive the rising attachment between Tresilian and herself, and would not attempt to deprive her of a man, in whom she was so deeply interested.

Harriet, however, was either blind to her sister's wishes, or regardless of them; for she showed the most insinuating attention to

Tresylian, though it was done in so easy, and seemingly, artless a way, that it did not appear the result of the smallest design. It had, however, the effect she wished; it attracted Tresylian, who returned her attentions; attended her on various excursions, in which Louisa could not join; and seemed on every occasion solicitous to please her.

For some time he continued likewise to show Louisa and Miss Hargrave distinguishing attentions; but it was to Harriet that he chiefly dedicated his time, and showed the most open devotion.

One morning, in the absence of the latter, he happened to call at Oak Hill, when Louisa had received an invitation to a ball given in the neighbourhood by Mrs. Fancourt.

She ventured to express, in flattering terms, her hope that he was to be there, to which he replied, by simply stating a particular engagement he had with a friend, which would prevent him.

The gay and easy manner in which he

spoke of his engagement, after she had expressed her wish that he should be at the ball, hurt Louisa, and she interpreted his behaviour into a proof of indifference to her, but she hoped it was also a proof of indifference to Harriet, who was likewise to be there.

In this hope she was not long indulged, for a few days after, she had the mortification to hear Harriet say, that Tresylian had broken his engagement with his friend, that he might have the pleasure of dancing with her, and that she had, therefore, promised to keep herself free from every other engagement.

This marked preference of Harriet, affected Louisa so much, that she could not accompany her sisters to the ball; and Harriet, on her return from it, told her, that she believed she had made a conquest of Tresylian. This intelligence was farther confirmed by Miss Hargrave, who said that he had devoted himself so entirely to Harriet during the evening, that it was remarked by several of the company.

The shadow of hope no longer remained to

Louisa, whose sole care now was to become indifferent about him ; but this was not so easy a task as she imagined. The attentions he had shown her at Larchwood, had never been so pointed as to give her any cause to reproach him for forsaking her; while the time she had passed in his society at Oak Hill, had increased her esteem for him, and strengthened her affection. To recall it, however, was absolutely necessary for her peace, and she believed that this could only be done by avoiding his company.

She had never avowed to Harriet, her affection for Tresilian, or the hopes she had cherished, as their characters were too different to admit of much confidence ; and she was ashamed to acknowledge expectations which might prove imaginary. She now resolved to conceal her disappointment with the utmost care, and to bury it for ever in her own breast ; but, though her voice was mute, her countenance too plainly spoke the altered state of her mind ; in the presence of Tresilian she was embarrassed and grave, till by degrees, she became cold and reserved, and

under an appearance of indifference, endeavoured to conceal her feelings.

Tresilian was surprised at her gravity, and often inquired the cause of it with concern ; but she treated his inquiries lightly, though she felt them so painful, that she almost forgot the laws of good breeding, in her endeavour to avoid his society.

His attention to Harriet daily increased, while Louisa made no progress in recovering tranquillity. Absence seemed the only means of restoring it, but of this she had no hope, as his marriage with Harriet would render separation from him impossible. She believed that she could rejoice in his happiness with another, if she was not obliged to witness it : but to see his affection bestowed on an object she thought unworthy of him ; and to feel for him the tenderness of a wife, when she ought to regard him only as a brother, were trials to which her fortitude was unequal : they affected her to a degree that ruined her peace, and injured her health.

In this manner sometime had elapsed,

when she and her sisters received an invitation to the house of their sister, Mrs. Elford, from which Louisa promised herself much consolation.

Mrs. Elford was a very amiable woman, who had always kept up a most affectionate intercourse with her sisters. The care of a family, however, had put it seldom in her power to come to Oak Hill, and she had never seen them all at the same time in her own house. This was a pleasure she had long earnestly desired, but had delayed till Captain Elford could be at home, and his professional duties made his residence with his family so precarious, that she had hitherto been prevented from seeing her sisters in the manner she most wished.

The time, however, at length arrived, when Captain Elford expected to be at home for some weeks, and Mrs. Elford requested her sisters to come, and remain with her as long as it should be agreeable to them.

Louisa expected this invitation would be the means of bringing Harriet's connection

with Tresylian to a crisis ; but, to her great surprise, Harriet accepted the invitation without appearing to have any consideration for him, although he seemed evidently concerned at her departure.

How to explain her behaviour, Louisa was entirely at a loss. Sometimes she imagined she must be so indifferent to him, as to have no intention of marrying him ; at other times she thought it so improbable that she could relinquish a man of his merit and fortune, whom she treated with marked attention, that she attributed her behaviour to a spirit of coquetry, which made her wish to continue some time longer the uncontrolled mistress of her actions, and to the finding herself too secure of Tresylian to run any risk of losing him by a short absence.

But whatever might be the cause of her conduct, the effect was happy, and Louisa hoped she should be able to accomplish a long separation from Tresylian. It was the design of her sisters to remain only two or three months with Mrs. Elford ; but it was

her intention privately to let them return to Oak Hill without her, and to remain herself with Mrs. Elford till the ensuing spring.

Unexpected occurrences, however, had unfortunately obliged her to relinquish this plan, and return to Oak Hill with her sisters, after an absence of little more than two months.

Unhappily she did not return more indifferent to Tresilian, though she endeavoured to conceal, even from herself, the strength of her affection for him. Constantia was the only person to whom she had acknowledged it; having, before her departure for Captain Elford's, found it impossible to refuse to her kindness an explanation of her melancholy.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A FORTNIGHT elapsed without Valmonson's revisiting Ornvile, and the sorrow his absence occasioned Constantia, was aggravated by knowing he had been at Oak Hill, and had twice met with Harriet at Ramsgate.

In vain did Louisa assure her, that politeness had rendered his visit to Oak Hill indispensable, and that his meetings with Harriet at Ramsgate were entirely the effect of her address.

" You know," said Louisa, " that she never sees an agreeable man without exercising her ingenuity in contrivances to meet with him; and she has the art of doing these

things in so easy and natural a way, that what would appear extraordinary in another, seems perfectly proper in her. The evening she brought him from Ornvile to Oak Hill, she dextrously engaged him to assist her in the choice of some prints, which she intends as a present to her nieces; these prints have been the sole cause of their meetings at Ramsgate, and, probably, brought him much sooner to Oak Hill than he would otherwise have come."

"All you say," replied Constantia, "may be perfectly just; their meetings may hitherto have been accidental, but how long will they continue so? He will not give me an opportunity of explaining my sentiments; and your sister's unwearied endeavours will, at length, enable her to supplant me in his affections, if she has not already done so."

Louisa made every attempt in her power to dispel her fears; but Constantia, though soothed by her kindness, was not convinced by her reasoning, and persuaded that Valmon-sor was lost to her for ever, she sunk into the deepest dejection.

Her favourite occupations became now indifferent to her; music was disagreeable,—society oppressive; her father, mother, and Louisa, were the only persons she wished to see:—her relish of life was gone.

At this period Mrs. Almorne returned to Delvin Lodge, and came immediately to visit her friends at Ornville Abbey.

The sight of her gave a ray of joy to Constantia, which diminished for a moment the gloom of her mind; but it could not long disappear, and Mrs. Almorne soon observed with concern, an alteration in her spirits, which she attributed to indisposition, and kindly inquired if she was well?

Being answered in the affirmative; she forebore making farther inquiries at the time, but convinced that something material affected her, she seized the first moment they were alone together, to inquire if her brothers had been giving her any cause for uneasiness?

“ None,” answered Constantia; “ we have

not seen, and hardly heard of them since your departure."

"Why then, my dear, have you so melancholy an appearance?"

She was at a loss to reply; and Mrs. Almorne perceiving her embarrassed, took her kindly by the hand, saying; "Forgive me, if I distress you; I can never desire to know anything, that you wish to conceal."

"I can never, my dear Madam," she quickly replied, "wish to have any concealments from you, and I will tell you——"

Constantia proceeded no farther,—feeling incapable of expressing herself as she wished, she stopt abruptly, and remained silent.

Mrs. Almorne, affected by her appearance, spoke to her in the most affectionate terms, and intreated to be intrusted with the cause of her sorrow, if it could afford her any satisfaction.

"If it is not in my power to serve you," said Mrs. Almorne, "my sympathy may,

perhaps console you ;—You have certainly met with some misfortune ?”

“ I have met with nothing,” she replied, “ that you may term such.”

“ Is it posible my Constantia can be thus affected by a trifle ?”

Constantia’s confusion now rendered all farther explanation unnecessary.

“ I see how it is,” said Mrs. Almorne; “ tell me, my dear, who is the object of your affection ;—confide in me, and be assured of the tenderest indulgence.”

With some difficulty Constantia gave Mrs. Almorne an account of Valmonsor ; and when she had done so, Mrs. Almorne desired her to begin the relation again, and give her as well as she could recollect, a minute detail of every circumstance that had occurred between them, from the first day of their meeting to the present time.

She complied ; and when her recital was finished, Mrs. Almorne told her, that she had

requested so minute an account, as her situation did not appear a common one, and it was only from the knowledge of the smallest particulars, that she could hope to form a correct opinion of Valmonsor's character and conduct.

"Your own views of him," said Mrs. Almorne, "appear to me perfectly just; you have no reason to doubt his affection, or his being prevented by want of fortune alone, from making his addresses to you; but, I suspect that your behaviour has been more mistaken, than you imagine. Be not, however alarmed at this, for I see a remedy; but it is necessary to speak to you freely, that you may be on your guard in future against similar mistakes. The men, who have hitherto distinguished you, required only a little encouragement to declare their affection; if their personal merit was sufficient to obtain your regard, their situation could not excite their apprehensions; but with Valmonsor it is different;—he has difficulties to contend with, which his regard for you makes him fear to involve you in, and which your habits, and the sentiments of your friends, forbid his even

thinking you can wish to overcome. Your first care, therefore, should have been to show him, that you could accommodate yourself to his situation. In his conversations with you, it has been his aim to discover if you could do so ; and had you been aware of his design, you could have removed his fears, without appearing to suspect them ; but, unconscious of his views, you replied to his observations as applicable to the generality of mankind. Had you been conversing with any other man, your language would have been proper ; your error, indeed, was almost unavoidable ; and Valmonsor's conduct has been ill judged, though natural in his situation : a little more experience, however, will convince him that nothing can be more mistaken than this indirect mode of obtaining opinions."

" I see," said Constantia, " the errors we have both committed, when I fear it is too late to repair them."

" I am far from thinking so," replied Mrs. Almorne ; " when you meet with him again,

instead of allowing him to lead the conversation, as you have hitherto done, you must endeavour to introduce subjects that will allow you to give him the impressions you wish."

"How will it be in my power? He comes not here; and if he did, he would not give me an opportunity of speaking to him. The last time we met, he avoided all conversation with me."

Mrs. Almorne paused a minute, and then said: "For once the genius of Harriet Hargrave may be useful. Since she is pleased with Valmonsor, she will oblige him to visit her; you may, therefore, meet with him at Oak Hill; and, if not, Louisa may, perhaps, better than yourself, give him the necessary views. There are few things which ingenuity and perseverance cannot accomplish; and as you have so excellent a friend in Louisa, you may safely entrust your interest to her; though except in such a dilemma, I would not advise you to leave any thing to the care of another, which you can possibly do yourself. In love

affairs, third persons should be employed as seldom as possible. From the peculiar situations and misjudging temperature of lovers, I have known trivial neglects, or mere errors of judgment in confidants, have effects as fatal as treachery itself."

"With Louisa, however," replied Constantia, "I shall be perfectly safe; on her care and prudence I may rely, as much as upon her friendship."

"Go to her then to-morrow, and before you set off, I will give you some further instructions for her conduct to Valmonsor; meanwhile do not allow yourself to despond, for Louisa will be able to correct his errors, and restore him to you soon."

Constantia began to be consoled by Mrs. Almorne's suggestions, and gratefully acknowledged her indulgence; which she said afforded her the more satisfaction, as it led her to hope that she did not disapprove of her attachment to Valmonsor.

" My dear girl," replied Mrs. Almorne, " I dare not say that there is nothing in your choice to regret, but, I believe there may be as little as can rationally be expected from any marriage you could make. On Sir Esmond Anson's knowledge of his character, I place much reliance; and of his agreeable qualities, I must certainly form a high idea, since he could so quickly engage your affections. My chief regret is, that you have formed so strong an attachment, while doubtful of the event."

" For the degree of my attachment, I think I can rationally account; but the suddenness of it I am at a loss to explain. Had I not, however, found him deserving of esteem, I am convinced my predilection for him would quickly have subsided, or at least, I should not have indulged it; but the extraordinary character given of him by Sir Esmond, with the meetings I had with him under the most favourable circumstances, made me yield to the pleasure I found in his society, before I had any suspicion of its fatal effects."

"I hope, my dear, you will never have any real cause to think them fatal. The suddenness of your partiality for him, I do not condemn. We cannot avoid being immediately prepossessed in favour of a pleasing countenance and behaviour; and your admiration of him, did not spring from external appearance, but his conversation and manners. It is certain that love can take place at first sight, and some of the steadiest and most virtuous attachments have commenced suddenly. It is not, therefore, the feeling quickly in such cases, that is blamable; but the allowing feeling to hurry us away without a due regard to character and circumstances. Your love for Valmonsor is, however, well placed; and I have no doubt that your conduct will always be properly regulated. I am persuaded you will be able to recall him, and I have no hesitation in desiring you to do so, by every means in your power. Were he a richer man, I should be afraid to say so; but in his situation, your encouraging him can only proceed from motives that do you

honour ; and when your mutual affection, and his uncommon merit are considered, there cannot certainly be a man in the world, whom I should now prefer to him for your companion through life."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE weather in the morning being favourable for walking, Constantia went to Oak Hill on foot, by a path through some fields, which made the distance little more than a mile.

She had always been fond of walking, but now, when she regarded carriages, and the other appendages of fortune, as obstacles to her union with Valmonsor, she viewed them with dislike. Many of them she had long considered merely as temporary advantages, of which she might soon be deprived; and she now determined, while they were yet in her power, to relinquish the use of them as much as she could.

At the door of Oak Hill, she met with

Louisa going to take a walk, and upon telling her that she wished to converse with her alone, they directed their steps to a plantation near the house, through which walks had been cut, and seats interspersed,

"Here," said Louisa, on entering it, "we shall be undisturbed: Prudence is writing, and though Harriet is walking, there is no danger of her interrupting us, as she never chooses a retired walk, when she is alone."

They then seated themselves on a bench, shaded by so thick a foliage, that though they could see persons at a distance, they could not be seen by them till they drew near.

Constantia gave Louisa a relation of the conversation she had had with Mrs. Almorne, with such instructions for her behaviour, to Valmonson, as Mrs. Almorne had thought necessary.

Louisa entered readily into her views, and said she expected to have very soon an opportunity of seeing him, as the invitations he had received from her sisters, must bring him, in a short time to Oak Hill.

"This very day," said Louisa, "if you will remain here, it is very probable you will see him. When he called last week, my sisters invited him to dine with us to-day, which at first he declined, saying he feared it would not be in his power; but I suspect he hesitated only from the dread of meeting with you in a small party; for afterwards, upon hearing that the Fancourts, and other friends, were to be with us, his reluctance suddenly subsided, and he said that he would endeavour to come. If he does, it will be early; as Harriet enjoined him to be here in time, to take a view of the beauties of Oak Hill before dinner."

"That she might," replied Constantia, "have a new opportunity of displaying her own.—Much as I wish to see him, I have not courage to meet with him in her presence; nor do I think it could be attended with any advantage in so large a company."

"If your courage already fails," said Louisa, "I shall not desire you to put it to the trial. At any rate, it will, perhaps, be better

to avoid the observation of Harriet, who may endeavour to prevent your intercourse with him, if she suspects you for her rival."

"I shall leave him entirely to your care, and shall now return home without seeing your sisters; the fear of Harriet agitates me so much, that I am in danger of behaving very awkwardly before her."

The instant Constantia had said these words, she perceived through the trees, Harriet advancing towards them, leaning upon the arm of Valmonsor, who seemed so much engaged in attending to her, as to be insensible to other objects.

In Constantia's state of mind, this sight was more than she could support;—her heart sunk with apprehension; and as they approached, she grew so faint, that she was obliged to rest her head on the shoulder of Louisa.

At the moment she did so, they observed her, and hastily advanced, struck with con-

cern at her appearance, which was alarming, both from her attitude, and the paleness of her countenance.

Harriet kindly inquired the cause of her indisposition ; to which Louisa replied only by requesting her to return to the house for a glass of water. This she did chiefly with the view of relieving Constantia from her presence ; and Harriet was obliged to depart, as Valmonsor made not the smallest attempt to save her the trouble.

He stood motionless, gazing on Constantia, with so strong an expression of distress evident in his countenance, as instantly convinced her that she was still unrivalled in his affection.

Nothing more was wanting to her recovery ; she quickly revived, and with inexpressible delight beheld his concern, while it drew from her a sigh, lest their affection should still be unfortunate.

Silence continued till Harriet returned, when

Constantia declared she was quite recovered, and regretted the trouble she had occasioned.

Harriet replied in obliging terms, and made several inquiries expressive of solicitude for her welfare; but no sooner did Valmonsor join in testifying satisfaction in Constantia's recovery, than Harriet's countenance changed, and, with a look which Constantia knew well how to interpret, she said, "After your being so ill, my dear, I am afraid we dare not expect you will join the company we are to have to-day; nor could we, perhaps, at any rate hope for that pleasure, as I heard this morning that Mrs. Almorne was just returned to the Abbey, after a long absence."

Constantia felt indignant at this little attempt to get rid of her, but was prevented from replying by Louisa, who, addressing her sister, said, "Miss Ornville must return home; and as our visitors put it out of our power to accompany her, Captain Valmonsor will, I dare say, be glad to escort her. It will be easy for you, Sir," continued she, turning to Valmonsor, "to do so, and return here before dinner."

"Miss Ornvile," said Harriet impatiently, "must not think of walking when she has been so ill; if she must go, we shall order the carriage for her."

"By no means," said Constantia, rising quickly, anxious to take advantage of Louisa's proposal; "I am now quite well, and shall be the better for a walk. If Captain Valmonsor will be so obliging as to accompany me through the park, he can return here in a few minutes."

Valmonsor immediately declared he would be happy to attend her; upon which Constantia, fearful of prevention, hastily took leave, without giving Harriet time to make farther opposition.

They had gone but a few steps, before Valmonsor expressed fear of her suffering by walking, so soon after her indisposition.

"My illness was so very trifling," she replied, "that I cannot be the worse for a walk; it is an exercise I am fond of, and

wish to accustom myself to, as a means of independence.”

“ In your situation,” said Valmonsor, “ I should not have expected that such a precaution could appear necessary.”

“ It is necessary in every situation,” returned Constantia, “ but in mine indispensable. The advantages of fortune, which I may at present avail myself of, rest so entirely on the life of my parents, that I regard them as mere temporary benefits, of which I ought to render myself completely independent.”

“ That is a happy, but singular mode of considering the advantages you possess, when there can be little reason to imagine you will ever be deprived of them.”

“ I have no cause to expect they will remain in my possession, nor do I even wish it; wealth has never been the object of my ambition.”

“ Although you may be indifferent to many of the comforts it bestows, yet the conse-

quence it gives the posseſſor must surely be high in your estimation."

" Far from it: for I could not be gratified by respect paid to adventitious circumstances."

" That is a very uncommon manner of thinking."

" And may appear so full of affectation, that it is necessary to say, I owe it to an uncommon education. Mrs. Almorne, instructed by the experience of a varied life, taught me to think as I do ; if my sentiments are just, the credit of them is due to her."

" You must, at least, allow yourself the merit of adopting her sentiments, under circumstances which might have been expected to counteract them ; surrounded as you are, by all the allurements of wealth, at a period of life in which mankind are not remarkable for resisting temptation."

" Had I met with Mrs. Almorne only a year or two ago, and listened to her admoni-

tions with advantage, after having been reared in contrary opinions, and nursed in all the luxuries of life, I might have deserved praise ; but Mrs. Almorne adopted me when a child, and gradually inspired me with the sentiments which now regulate my conduct : the allurements of fortune I cannot be said to resist, since I certainly do not prize them.”

“ Although you will not allow yourself the merit which no other person will deny you, I may at least be permitted to hope, that it will be rewarded, by your never being exposed to the hardships of life.”

“ Alas !” said Constantia, “ who can be exempted from them ?”

“ Not many, certainly ; but pecuniary difficulties, at least, will not assail you : poverty, that fruitful source of human woe, you can never experience.”

“ How should I be secure from it ?”

“ Because,” replied Valmonsor, in a hesitating manner, “ before you have the mis-

fortune to lose your parents, you will be married to some man of fortune."

"Never!" said Constantia, emphatically.

"Have you made a vow against men of fortune?" said Valmonsor, smiling.

"I mean," replied she, "that my choice will never be influenced by pecuniary considerations; affection, and personal merit, alone will determine it."

Valmonsor made no answer, and they walked silently a few minutes, till they came in view of the Abbey, where a handsome phaeton and four beautiful ponies, announced visitors.

"Does not the sight of this equipage," said Valmonsor, "inspire you with some admiration of wealth? You cannot surely be insensible to the numberless enjoyments it gives."

"I am not insensible to them; but I regard them as only secondary advantages, incapable of themselves of giving real happiness; and I

should willingly relinquish them all for objects which appear to me of infinitely greater value.”

Valmonsor again became silent ; and a minute after they arrived at the house, which he declined entering, but Constantia earnestly requested he would step in for a few minutes, that she might have the pleasure of introducing Mrs. Almorne to him, as she ardently wished them to be acquainted.

“ Can you really,” said Valmonsor, with an anxious look, and softened voice, “ thus interest yourself for me ? ”

“ Is it possible,” replied Constantia, with emotion, “ that you can doubt it ? ”

At these words, the change on Valmonsor’s countenance evinced how powerfully a few words from her could affect him, and instilled into her mind the pleasing hope, that her conversation might have made the impression she wished.

On entering the drawing-room, they found Mr. Dormer was the visitor of whom they had been apprized by his equipage ; he had just risen to take leave, but stopped a few minutes to talk to Constantia.

Valmonsor remained some time after his departure.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHEN Mrs. Almorne retired for the night, Constantia attended her to her apartment, to relate the incidents of the day, and to thank her for the happy consequences which had already resulted from her advice.

Mrs. Almorne listened to her recital with extreme satisfaction ; and, when it was ended, told her, that if any doubt of Valmonson's affection had remained in her mind, she could now assure herself of it, from her own observation.

"I had a proof of it to-day," said Mrs. Almorne ;" which, though it may appear trifling to you, is, in my mind, more unequivocal than any declaration, or even than his marrying you could be."

"I know not," answered Constantia, "how you could discern, in half an hour's conversation upon ordinary topics, a stronger proof of affection than in an union for life."

"In the way that you consider marriage," replied Mrs. Almorne, "it will appear extraordinary; but marriage is an act, which though the most important of our life, seldom obtains the consideration it deserves; it takes place from such a variety of causes, that I never regard it as a proof of affection, even with respect to those marriages which, from their imprudence, are termed love-matches: transient admiration, vanity, disappointed love, compassion, successful arts, with various other causes, as distinct from love, as from interest, lead people to marry: but the feeling I saw in Valmonsor to-day, could spring only from affection. Dormer's handsome person and familiar manner had, I suppose, alarmed him; for no sooner did he see him engage you in conversation, than his colour changed, and every feature underwent a transformation."

"Strange!" cried Constantia; "for the in-

stant before I should have said, that he had not a doubt of my affection."

"The fears of a lover are never asleep ; the moment a rival appears, confidence vanishes ; and even without the dread of one, love is so distrustful, that proofs of affection are constantly required to satisfy the heart."

"Oh!" exclaimed Constantia, "if Valmonsor could feel, for a moment, the torture of jealousy, how much should I pity him! Had the anguish I felt to-day continued a little longer, I should have welcomed death as a blessing. How well do I now understand what Zanga says of jealousy :

"I have turn'd o'er the catalogue of woes

"Which sting the heart of man, and find none equal.

"It is the Hydra of calamities."

"There are none worse, I believe," said Mrs. Almorne ; "but, such is the state of mankind, I fear there are many equal. No situation is more productive of them than a soldier's; have you fully considered it?"

" Not fully, perhaps ; but a very slight view of what is passing in the world was sufficient to make me lament that Valmonsor was a soldier."

" He has given you a view of it in time of peace ; and, during war, its miseries are innumerable. The wife of a deserving man, who could preserve any tranquillity or cheerfulness when her husband is exposed to the calamities of war, is a being with whom I should never wish to converse ; yet I am far from thinking death the greatest evil he has to dread. A noble-minded man would not lament the sacrifice of his life in a good cause ; but the misfortune of the military and naval professions is, that they may expose a man to fight against his conscience. What would you have felt in seeing your husband employed in the subjugation of the Poles or the Swiss ?"

" Do not speak of it."

" Were a man, even from the most mistaken views, to disapprove of a war in which

he happens to be engaged, still it may render his situation one of the most humiliating and wretched in which man can be employed."

"I fear," said Constantia, sighing, "that, with Valmonsor, or without him, I shall be miserable."

"You must think me very cruel, for thus depicting the miseries of his profession; but it is only to make you fully sensible of the happiness which, I trust, awaits you. When you told me that Valmonsor was a soldier, it made me very unhappy, till you informed me of his dislike to the military life, which encouraged me to hope that he might be induced to abandon it."

"How is it possible?"

"Listen—You expect five thousand pounds from your father, but I know that you will have more. When Lady Horndon married, he had not succeeded to the Ashgrove estate, and he gave her, therefore, only that sum; but, on the improvement of his fortune, he

promised her an addition. Lately, however, the increased expense of living made him think that you ought to have twelve thousand, and he has accordingly bequeathed you that sum, and has made your sister's portion the same. You may thus reckon upon having, with Lady Anson's legacy, seventeen thousand pounds: and as it will be in your father's power and mine to improve your fortune many ways, I venture to hope, that Valmonsor will give up his commission, and turn farmer."

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed Constantia, "am I not in a dream! It was but yesterday I thought I had not a refuge from despair!"

"The scheme I propose," resumed Mrs. Almorne, "will not be more agreeable to you than to your father; of whose approbation of your marriage with Valmonsor you may be perfectly secure: had I not thought so, you may believe I should not have ventured to give you advice without consulting him."

"Can I," cried Constantia, melting into tears, "believe in such happiness!—Shall I then always be with my father and mother, and with you, my dearest friend and benefactor!—If I cannot, on ordinary occasions, express what I feel for you, how shall I now!"

"I am delighted to see you happy, my dear Constantia; but let us moderate our joy, till we know that Valmonsor will acquiesce in our views. Though he dislikes his profession, he may not think it proper to quit it immediately, and go into retirement."

"He will never hesitate."

"Probably not; but I wish to see him act uninfluenced by others. You would not choose him to sacrifice his inclination to yours in a matter of such importance?"

"Such a sacrifice would be so far from conduced to my peace, that I should live in continual terror of his repentance."

"I am persuaded you would; and though I

would not desire you to oppose his wishes ; yet, if you find them adverse to your own in a point so essential to your comfort, you may at least gently suggest to him what occurs to you upon the subject. Farther you should not go ; and I hope you will not have occasion to go so far. During the short time that I saw him to-day, he pleased me extremely : strong character appears in his countenance ; acuteness and knowledge in his conversation ; and elegance in his manners : for once I find the portrait drawn by love may be a just likeness."

" How infinitely more grateful is your approbation of him than my own ! "

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONSTANTIA hoped the conversation she had had with Valmonsor, would obviate all his difficulties, and bring him immediately to the Abbey.

In two days he came;—no longer the grave, reserved, unhappy man he had lately been, but with a countenance beaming with satisfaction.

He entered the drawing-room about two o'clock, when she was sitting alone, beginning to write a note, which he begged he might not interrupt; but she assured him that it was in no haste, and she would delay it till the morning, as she hoped he was come to spend the day at the Abbey.

He bowed assent, and taking a seat on the

sofa beside her, inquired after Sir John and Lady Orville?

She replied they were well ; that her mother was abroad taking an airing with a friend, and her father busy writing, but they would be happy to see him at dinner.

" You are not often thus alone ?" said Valmonsor.

" Very seldom," replied Constantia : " too seldom."

" You are not then afraid of solitude ?"

" Absolute solitude I never experienced ; but I can be happy alone, and am apt to find the company which is not agreeable, very tiresome."

" The company that you will think agreeable is seldom to be met with."

" I do not wish to be fastidious, but——"

" But," said Valmonsor, perceiving she hesitated, " you have little taste for mixed society."

"Large mixed parties," replied she, "do very well, when there is one or two, who can entertain the rest; the company that is most tiresome is, when there are three or four dull people, who have no talents for general conversation, yet prevent our reaping the advantage, which may sometimes be drawn, even from an insipid person in a tête-à-tête."

While this conversation was passing, Valmonsor's eyes were constantly wandering from Constantia to a sheet of paper on the table before her, upon which she had written Miss Ornville.

"I know not," said he, "how it happens that I always, in some degree, regard the writing of a person, as I do their picture."

"It is," replied Constantia, "because, like the features of the face, it is a mean by which we receive the expression of the sentiments."

"I never received the expression of your sentiments in that way," returned Valmonsor; "yet these two words say a great deal to me.

Will you permit me," continued he, laying hold of the sheet of paper, "to take posseſſion of them?"

"They will hardly," answered Constantia, "give you the knowledge of my hand."

"They will give me," said Valmonsor, putting the paper carefully in his pocket-book, "more than you can imagine."

He paused a moment,—then with a softened voice, and look of extreme tenderness, he added: "Your name, Miss Ornvile,—your name, at all times has a magic power over me,—but when written by yourself, it conveys to my heart more than I have the power of expressing."

Upon saying this, Valmonsor rose in visible agitation, and walked across the room;—then resuming his seat, he said: "Can you Miss Ornvile—is it possible that you——"

Hardly had he pronounced the last word, when the door opened, and Harriet Hargrave, with Tresilian entered.

The regret and confusion Constantia felt on seeing them, did not escape the observation of Harriet ; who regarding her with a very inquisitive eye, asked what metaphysical subject she and Captain Valmonsor had been discussing ?

After a momentary silence, Constantia so far recovered herself as to answer with some appearance of ease, that Captain Valmonsor and she, had been considering what kind of company was agreeable.

" And we," replied Harriet, " are just come to show you,—provided, my dear," added she, with a penetrating look, " our visit is not very inconvenient."

" Tell me, Miss Orville," cried Tresilian, " how one can render themselves agreeable ; give me but instructions, and I will obey them to the utmost of my ability."

" The most sovereign rule for being agreeable," said Harriet, " is to talk to people of themselves, or to let them do it."

"In a tête-à-tête," replied Tresilian, "that rule is infallible, but in a larger company——"

"O, in a larger company," cried Harriet, "the first point is to take,—not give the tone. Do you, therefore, Captain Valmonsor, repeat what you were saying to Miss Ornville, and if we cannot exactly re-echo your sentiments, you may, at least, derive entertainment from our observations."

"We have no doubt of your talents," answered Constantia, quickly, anxious to spare Valmonsor a reply; "and we know you do every thing in so agreeable a manner, as to render even trifles interesting."

"Is that a compliment, my dear?" said Harriet; "Mr. Delwyn, who is just returned from the Continent, will tell you, that where the manners are most agreeable, the morals are least correct."

"That is the observation," said Tresilian, "of a plain man, who wishes to find an apology for his own defects."

"The state of morality and manners on the Continent," observed Valmonsor, "may seem to justify the opinion; but it is certainly fallacious: loose morals, and polished manners, are not necessarily conjoined."

"Far from it," replied Tresilian; "and to think otherwise, is no less mistaken than unfortunate. Gallantry has certainly great influence on manners on the Continent; but it is a mistake to suppose, that it is necessary to form the most polished manners: many causes conspire to produce them, and they will naturally result from enlargement of mind, taste, and benevolence of heart."

"There certainly are," said Valmonsor, "many instances of men of superior understanding and taste, with great goodness of heart, who have the very plainest manners; but these men have been peculiarly situated; — either obliged to associate with vulgar people, or so engrossed by scientific pursuits, as to be abstracted from the affairs of life."

"Yes," replied Tresilian; "but these circumstances are apt to be overlooked, and their

plainness attributed to contempt of manner, as a matter beneath their concern. Mr. Delwyn, who is a man of knowledge and abilities, but rough in his behaviour, and negligent of dress, satisfies himself with the idea, that a mind occupied with important concerns, cannot descend to attend to trifles ; not considering that a truly able mind comprehends all things, and can do all things well. It is not attention to small matters, but the over-rating their importance, that indicates a little mind."

" Are we not apt," said Constantia, " to forget the distinction which should be made between fashionable, and truly polite manners ? I have known persons of simple, even awkward behaviour, who were wholly ignorant of the etiquette necessary in fashionable circles, yet led by genuine taste, and gentleness of nature to the truest politeness. I am always inclined to judge of goodness of heart by the external behaviour ; by the exercise or neglect of " those small sweet courtesies which smooth the road of life," but this may lead into mistakes."

" We cannot mistake the motives of Miss

Ornville's behaviour," said Tresilian, "when we see the attractions which chiefly draw her attention."

"What attractions?" cried Valmonson.

"The being," answered Tresilian, "the most diffident or unfortunate person in company."

"Claims," said Harriet, "which I hope neither of you, gentlemen, can ever have to her notice."

"Pardon me," replied Tresilian; "diffidence is evidently one of the most striking features in my character."

"Yes," rejoined Harriet; "and your misfortunes are as great as Sir Jacob Rich's, who calls himself a most unfortunate man, while all the world agree to think the contrary."

"And whether," cried Tresilian, "should the world, or Sir Jacob, be believed? Is not he the best judge of his own sufferings? Or is not the man who thinks himself unfortunate, though mistaken, more an object of pity, than

he who meets with real misfortunes, without feeling them?"

"True," returned Harriet; "but in this way we should be so much perplexed where to bestow our sympathy, that we should be in danger of preserving it unimpaired."

"I confess," said Valmonson, "I have so often found mine thrown away, that I have frequently wished for a thermometer, by which I might ascertain the degree of a man's feelings, as exactly as I could the beatings of his pulse by a watch."

"Such a thermometer," cried Harriet, "would be the ruin of happiness; of lovers, particularly, whose very existence depends upon hope and fear."

As she said this, she fixed her eyes upon Constantia with a look so expressive, as threw her into confusion; but happily the entrance of Lady Ornvile, with other company, relieved her from observation, and gave a turn to the conversation.

During the rest of the day, Constantia had no opportunity of conversing with Valmonsor. Harriet always contrived to place herself near him, and behaved in the most winning manner; and although he returned her attentions no farther than politeness seemed to require, yet Constantia could not see them without much uneasiness. She endeavoured to inspire herself with confidence in his affection from his behaviour before the arrival of Harriet; but still the charms of the latter appeared before her as a magnet empowered with irresistible force. She beheld her attractions with real admiration, particularly her gaiety; a quality of which Constantia had been wholly deprived, since her acquaintance with Valmonsor: and when she contrasted herself with the gay, the brilliant, fascinating Harriet, her heart filled with apprehensions, and she could with difficulty command firmness sufficient to conceal the unhappiness she suffered.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WHEN Constantia ceased to see Harriet Hargrave in the presence of Valmonsor, she ceased to be afraid of her, and almost wondered at the terror she had felt. Since he had hitherto been able to regard her with indifference, how could she fear that he would not still do so, when she was assured of his affection for herself? Innumerable were the times she reflected on his words, when he requested the sheet of paper;—his look and manner dwelt in her imagination, and conveyed transport to her heart.

In a few days Valmonsor returned to the Abbey,—returned with all the joy and kindness in his appearance Constantia could wish: but again, a crowd of company rendered it impossible to converse with him, except on

the most general topics; yet so sweetly did time glide in his presence, when no Harriet was near, that she hardly regretted the number of the guests.

4.

His regret of this seemed greater than her's; and he seized a moment, while he sat next to her, to observe, with concern, that visitors were so frequent at the Abbey, that she could not be a minute secure from them.

On a former visit, Sir John had mentioned to him a beautiful spot in the neighbourhood, called Willowfield, which he wished him to see; and Valmonsor took an opportunity he had of speaking to Constantia a few minutes apart from the company, to ask if she would do him the favour to take a ride with him to Willowfield some morning.

She very readily expressed her absent: adding, that she would go any day the weather was tolerable.

"It must be more than tolerable," said Valmonsor, "to permit me the satisfaction I

wish. It must not only allow us to ride, but to walk, at Willowfield. Nor is this all I have to request:—if, the day we intend going, any person should happen to be here who might possibly accompany us, may I beg that you will say nothing of our excursion before them, but permit me to repeat my visit, till I can have the happiness of going with you alone."

"There are seldom," replied Constantia, "any visitors here before eleven o'clock: come, therefore, early the first morning you are pleased with the weather; and, if there are no interlopers in the way, I shall certainly accompany you to Willowfield."

This engagement Constantia interpreted as a proof of his intention to come to the explanation she wished; which, on different accounts, she earnestly desired. She was anxious to relieve him from the apprehensions he might suffer from his ignorance of her fortune, and of the plan Mrs. Almorne proposed for him, which she persuaded herself would give him the utmost satisfaction; but she likewise ardently wished for an éclaircissement, that

she might make her father and mother acquainted with her attachment to him. Though she had always been determined never to enter into any engagements without their consent; yet she could not be easy in acting, in the smallest particular, without their knowledge and approbation.

Her father, indeed, she did not suppose, could be ignorant of her affection for Valmonsor; for though she had not avowed, she had never dissembled it: her attention had been designedly so open, that she could not imagine it had escaped his notice; and since he had not discouraged, she flattered herself he had not disapproved of it.

The morning after Constantia had made the engagement with Valmonsor to go to Willowfield, she rose very early, and went abroad before any of the family were stirring. She was always an early riser, and the morning was the time in which she delighted most in the contemplation of rural scenes; before the busy sons of Care call off the attention to the employments of life.

There is a heavenly stillness at an early hour in a fine morning, which has a peculiar power in composing the mind, and leading it to exalted admiration of the beauties of nature. Constantia felt this forcibly, and, during summer, often went abroad before five o'clock in the morning. This day the weather was uncommonly fine, and she sauntered long indulging the most pleasing reflections, before she sat down on a seat in the lawn. To sit in the fields, and look around her in a still and silent state, was one of her great luxuries; and she had enjoyed this pleasure some time, before she sunk into a reverie, from which a rustling in the grass aroused her, and on looking up she beheld Valmonson.

For a minute neither of them spoke ;—she was too much surprised, and he seemed to enjoy her surprise too much to interrupt it.

At length he broke silence by saying, “ If you knew how happy I am in believing your countenance bids me welcome, you would hardly, I hope, refuse me the pleasure of knowing if you do not regret this intrusion?”

" My countenance," replied Constantia, " would ill accord with the feelings of my heart, if it did not bid you welcome ;—but how is it that I see you so early ? I expected you indeed to day, as the weather is fine, but not so soon ; as you said you would not come before breakfast."

" And had I come only to go to Willowfield, I should not have been so early ; but, unfortunately, I come to postpone our excursion. On my return to Ramsgate last night, I found some friends waiting my arrival, to whom I am under great obligations, and whom I had not seen for years. They had come forty miles out of their way to meet with me ; yet notwithstanding this kindness, I was so much disappointed at the thoughts of delaying my engagement with you, that at first, I resolved to tell them I could not be with them this morning. On a little reflection, however, I changed my design. I thought it unkind and unjust to plead an engagement for which you had permitted me to choose the time, and besides,—I was uncertain—if on my return from you, I might be in a state to

converse with them.—I thought it better, therefore, to delay the excursion to Willowfield till their departure ; and I came here thus early to explain to you my situation.”

“ Will they remain long ?”

“ Only a few days ; they told me their stay would be short, and the moment they depart, I shall return to claim your promise.”

“ Are they a numerous party ? Ladies and Gentlemen ?”

“ No ladies,—only two gentlemen who never were at Ramsgate before ; and having no acquaintance there, depend entirely upon me : but they know not the sacrifice I make to them.”

“ A few days, I hope, will be all the delay.”

“ Yes, I trust a few days at farthest ;—with that hope I shall endeavour to console myself ;—but are you certain of being disengaged a few days hence ?”

“ I shall keep myself disengaged ; and if

you come early, there is little danger of your encountering visitors."

"The first morning I am at liberty, I shall certainly return. Have you been long abroad?"

"Long—I sauntered above an hour before I sat down here."

"How unfortunate I am in not having come sooner! but I was afraid to intrude upon you at an earlier hour.—What a heavenly morning is this! How beautiful every object appears!—If there is a heaven on earth, it must surely be in such scenes as these—in such moments——"

Valmonsor hesitated, as if afraid to finish the sentence, and a minute after added, "What a day this would have been for Willowfield!—but I dare not trust myself to think of it."

"In a few days," said Constantia, "you will be at liberty."

"Yes, in three or four days, I shall certainly be at liberty."

"And now," added he, after a long pause, "I fear I must go,—I promised to be early with my friends."

He lingered however, some minutes with his watch in his hand, and at length said, "I should certainty depart,—yet know not how to leave you."

"I shall go with you," said Constantia, rising, and turning towards the Abbey.

They then walked slowly to the house, where Valmonsor, reluctantly bid her adieu.

As long as she could she kept him in view; and as she stood gazing on the spot in which she lost sight of him, she exclaimed, "In a few days my fate will be decided! and,

"O! that one destiny our life may guide,
"Nor wild, nor deep, our common way divide."

CHAPTER XXIX.

Two days after Valmonson's visit, Harriet Hargrave sent her maid to Constantia early in the morning with a commission she had executed for her the day before at Ramsgate, and an apology for not bringing it herself; by being obliged to go immediately upon an excursion with Miss Hargrave.

On receiving this message, Constantia inquired of the maid, when they were to return, and how Miss Louisa was to be engaged in their absence?

She was informed they would not be at home till the evening, and that Miss Louisa was to spend the day alone at Oak Hill.

On hearing this, it occurred to Constantia that she ought to go, and pass the day with her. It was so seldom that she could meet with Louisa alone, that she thought she should not omit so favourable an opportunity for it; but anxious to avoid the possibility of missing Valmonsor, though the next day was the soonest she had any reason to expect him; she did not set out for Oak Hill till near twelve o'clock.

Louisa was overjoyed to see her, and told her that she had wished to invite her the moment she knew that her sisters were to be from home, but was restrained by the fear of damping the happy tone of her mind, by the melancholy of her own.

"That might make you afraid to bring me hither," replied Constantia; "but should not have prevented your coming to me, where your melancholy would be less contagious. Sorrow, my dear Louisa, increases by indulgence; and I should hope yours might be alleviated by coming to the Abbey."

"It would, if I had spirit to make the exertion necessary for company, but of that I am incapable at present."

"It may not become me, Louisa, who so lately sunk under distress, to urge you to exertion: but my sorrow arose, in a great measure, from believing I had thrown away my own happiness, and possibly that of another, by imprudence: when there is no cause for self-reproach, and concern is only for one's self, it may certainly be easier to struggle against misfortune."

"I acknowledge it, and was so much persuaded a little exertion, when absent from Tresilian, could restore me^{*} to peace, that I had intended to remain with Mrs. Elford till winter or spring, without a doubt of returning to you in tranquillity; but my plan has been frustrated by causes which increase my unhappiness, and deprive me of all power of exertion.—But let me not intrude my sorrows upon you; permit me only to assure you, that the depression of my spirits is far from arising wholly from Tresilian."

“ Whence then does it spring? Tell me, I beseech you; you cannot suspect me of idle curiosity; but I always fancy it may be in my power to alleviate your distresses.”

“ And it is in your power, in as much as your friendship is the greatest consolation of my life; but at present it would be cruel to trouble you with my vexations ”

“ It may be more cruel to leave me to conjecture them; but if the discovery is painful, I shall not desire it.”

“ It is no farther painful, than as it may be distressing to you; for it is always a consolation to open my heart to you.”

“ Speak then, I pray you without reserve.”

“ Perhaps I ought, were it only to justify my behaviour.—You will not be surprised to hear that Harriet is the cause of almost all my distresses. You know too well her passion for admiration, which has often carried her lengths that you and I have trembled at; and has at last been productive of a misfortune,

which has sunk me in despair, as its consequences are not only most fatal, but can never be repaired."

" You know, I believe, that we have seldom been in company with Captain Elford. When we did meet with him, it was for a short time, and generally in mixed companies. On our late visit at his house, it was otherwise: the last month of our stay he was constantly at home, and had few visitors. Harriet was thus left without any person to gratify her vanity except himself; and he was too agreeable not to inspire her with the desire of exciting his admiration. At first, I believe she had nothing more in view than to obtain a little of Sterne's delicious essence," without which she cannot exist; but in pursuing this, she did not consider consequences, and displayed her various attractions before him with such address, that from the friendly brother, he very soon became the passionate admirer.

" I foresaw this before it happened, and cautioned her against it, but she laughed at my fears, declaring he had been too long, and

too happily married, to regard her with more than common admiration. In a very short time, I believe she was convinced of her mistake ; but his admiration was then too gratifying to be relinquished. Hardly indeed, did he admire, before he became extremely fond of her ; and so little was he at pains to conceal his partiality, that when his wife was not present, his sole object seemed to be to insinuate himself into her favour. Her residence in his house, and the privileges of a brother in law, gave him opportunities for this, which no other man could have had ; and I had soon reason to believe, that he was hardly more captivated with her, than she was with him.

" Had he been an amiable man, she would probably have only ruined his domestic happiness, and broken the heart of his wife, as she had destroyed the peace of many other women, without endangering her own ; but Elford is a man of strong passions and a very selfish disposition, who could not be restrained from indulging any fancy of his own, by regard to the happiness of others ; and it is therefore, probable, that he would have

drawn Harriet into a very strong attachment, if she had remained in his house; but their misconduct was so glaring, as to strike Prudence, as well as myself, and we insisted on her returning immediately to Oak Hill. With some difficulty she consented, and to my surprise Captain Elford did not oppose our design. As no time had been fixed for our stay, it was not extraordinary that we should think of putting an end to our visit; yet I expected he would have desired us to prolong it. He only, however, requested that we would delay our journey a few days, as he was then going a part of our way, and would escort us.

" We complied with this request, as we thought we could not refuse it, without exciting suspicions in his wife, which we were most anxious to prevent. We knew, indeed, that she was not wholly blind to Harriet's improper behaviour; for she had hinted her disapprobation of it in a manner that urged us to hasten our departure; but we hoped that she had not seen its consequences in a light that would affect her peace. -

"The evening, however, of the day on which we had consented to postpone our journey, she complained of being ill, and did not appear at supper ; and next morning she took me aside, and putting a note into my hand, entreated I would read it privately. It contained an earnest request to Prudence and me, to take Harriet instantly away ; the motives for which she would explain at a future time ; but that she could not then venture, by conversing with us in private, to incur the suspicion of having influenced our change of measures.

"This note determined us to depart immediately ; and while Prudence gave the necessary directions for our journey, I went to Harriet, and told her we had resolved to set off without delay, and hoped she would make no objection. Whether she suspected our motive, or was unwilling to offend us, I cannot say ; but she offered no opposition to our design, and in a few hours we left the house to the great surprise of Elford,—to whom Prudence apologised for our abrupt departure, by saying she had received a letter, which obliged us to return home immediately.

"We have since had a letter from Mrs. Elford, in which she declines giving any explanation of her conduct at present; but conjures us as we value her peace, to prevent Harriet's visiting her in winter, which she had reason to believe was her intention.

"The precise cause of Mrs. Elford's sudden anxiety to get quit of Harriet, we cannot pretend to determine; but it is too plain that she sees her husband's passion for her, and dreads her presence.—After telling you this, is it necessary to say how much I am distressed?"

"Too well have you accounted for your melancholy; and I am so much concerned at the cause of it, that I hardly know what to say:—yet, amidst the gloom which surrounds you, I perceive a ray of light; Harriet's favour for Elford will prevent her marriage with Tresilian."

"It may retard, but I do not think it will prevent it. My unhappiness about him, has been heightened by the very visit which I

hoped was to remove it ; for my regret on his account increases with my knowledge of her character, which I am but daily developing. ‘ Opportunity alone makes us known to ourselves, or to others.’ ”

“ She cannot, certainly, design to marry Tresilian, when she intends a winter visit at Elford’s.”

“ Her intentions are so fluctuating, that there is no depending on them a moment. Were Elford present, I think his influence with her would be great ; but in absence, she will soon forget him. Her vanity absorbs all other feelings, and requires perpetual gratification. Her situation with Tresilian I cannot penetrate. He is seldom absent from her, yet we hear nothing of their marriage ; and he talks of going soon to visit a relation at a distance.”

“ I wish he were gone : you will be better in his absence.”

“ I shall be better, but know not how I can

ever be well. Having told you of my heaviest distresses, I will tell you them all, that you may judge perfectly of my conduct and situation. Oak Hill is no longer the agreeable place it was to me a year ago. I was never happy with Prudence or Harriet, but, till I saw Tresilian, my heart was light; and I was fortunate in so many respects, that the domestic vexations I experienced, though they lessened my comfort, did not injure my peace. Now it is otherwise: I cannot see Harriet without the most painful sensations; and unhappily her conduct has soured the temper of Prudence, which is naturally bad, to such a degree, as renders it extremely distressing. It is not only Harriet's behaviour to Elford that has irritated Prudence, but her want of economy, which falls heavily upon us both."

"How can her want of economy affect you?"

"You shall hear. Upon our coming to Oak Hill, it was settled, that we should annually assign a certain part of our income for household expences, of which, Prudence, from choice, undertook the management. For a

year this did very well, but the second, Harriet neglected to pay her share of the domestic expenses, which obliged Prudence to supply the deficiency from her own purse. She did not complain of this at first, imagining that Harriet had inadvertently involved herself in pecuniary embarrassments, which she would be at pains to recover from; but instead of this, she becomes daily more inconsiderate, and is now deeply in arrears. As soon as I knew that she did not make regular payments, I desired Prudence to draw on me for the half of Harriet's debt; which, I believe, has only made her more indifferent to economy, for by the loss falling equally upon us both, she imagines that it cannot prove heavy to either."

"How does she imagine you can support it?"

"By thinking us too insipid to spend our money."

"How is her own disposed of?"

"In dress, expensive excursions, and numberless presents, which she gives for the sake

of popularity. She has taken from us the power of being generous, or even charitable; and has exposed us to inconveniences, which may oblige us to alter our manner of living. All this provokes Prudence extremely; but she is particularly indignant at her injuring our credit, and exalting her own at our expense. Her conduct, in various ways, has this effect; particularly by her feeding regularly a number of poor from the kitchen, for which she is extolled by the servants and others, as possessing a generosity of which we are incapable."

"Can you suffer such imposition?"

"How can we help it? We cannot countermand her orders, without strengthening the mistake; nor can we think of disappointing the poor, who now depend upon her charity for their support."

"I would then oblige her to pay her debts."

"How? We remonstrate in vain; she makes promises, but never performs them.—We cannot take her money by force, nor say to our attorney, you must give Miss Harriet's money to us.—I have sometimes thought of

desiring your mother to interfere ; but besides my unwillingness to impose so disagreeable a task upon her, I am very doubtful of its effects. It might put an end to our domestic harmony, which would be far worse than the loss of money. At present Harriet's temper is agreeable ; were it soured, what a life should we lead !—When people are obliged to live together, Constantia, they must submit to many hardships, for the sake of peace.”

“ Would to heaven ! some amiable man could draw your affections from Tresilian, and remove you at once from all your tormentors.”

“ Of that there can be no chance, could I even wish it. I can never be partially distinguished by any man, while under the same roof with Harriet ; I cannot contend with her powerful natural attractions, and still more powerful arts.”

“ But you shall be separated from her, my dear Louisa, as soon as I have a house to offer you a home in : your peace is necessary to mine ; and you will not refuse me the heart-

felt delight I shall feel in endeavouring to restore it."

"Nothing can be more gratifying to me than your kindness; but I dare not indulge the hope of finding an asylum in your house. Your husband might not approve, though he did not oppose your design; and you cannot too carefully study his happiness."

"My anxiety about you, Louisa, has made me fully deliberate upon this plan; though it was not my intention to mention it, till I could put it in execution. I do not mean to propose it to Valmonsor, but merely to make him acquainted with your situation, and leave himself to suggest the measure I wish. Neither do I desire that it should take place immediately upon my marriage. It is my earnest hope, that for some time after it, you should reside at Ornville, which will be an agreeable change to you, a most happy event for my father and mother, and relieve me from a load of anxiety upon their account. In you they would still have a daughter, which will be evidently so necessary to their comfort, that your sisters cannot object to my design."

“ This is, indeed, a plan which will give me the truest pleasure, without being attended with any disadvantage : for I am persuaded that Prudence will neither disapprove of it, nor regret my absence from home.—How much shall I delight in having an opportunity of testifying my regard for your revered father and mother, and my gratitude to you my beloved friend !”

“ Try then, my dearest Louisa, to indulge some hope of future comfort.”

“ I will try ;—I will hope for peace in the sanctuary you design me, and that henceforth I shall find my happiness in yours ;—in

“ Friendship ! that best support of wretched man,
“ Which gives us, when our life is hateful to us,
“ A sweet existence in another’s being.”

CHAPTER XXX.

WHEN Constantia returned home in the evening, she was much chagrined, by hearing, from her mother, that Valmonsor had come to the Abbey a few minutes after her departure in the morning.

"When he asked for you," said Lady Ornville, "I told him that you were gone to pass the day at Oak Hill, which seemed to surprise him greatly; for he repeated the name twice, as if I must have mistaken it. I can't imagine why he should think it extraordinary that you should be there; it is surely one of the most natural places in the world for you to go to; yet he inquired, if you had any particular motive for being there to-day?—I told him I knew of none; I believed your visit was a voluntary act of kindness, though you might perhaps

have some farther inducement, as you had received a message from Harriet in the morning.—He made a short visit, and did not appear altogether in his usual style."

Constantia had no doubt the alteration which appeared in his manner was owing to disappointment at not finding her at home; but why he was surprised at her being at Oak Hill, or why, if his friends were gone, he had not come at an earlier hour, she was at a loss to imagine. She hoped a day or two would explain his conduct; and she determined not to be from home in the morning till she saw him.

She was engaged to make some visits in the neighbourhood with her father and mother, but none of them would oblige her to leave Ornville before one o'clock; and from the few places where they were to pass the night, she resolved to return home alone before breakfast, if the weather gave any chance of Valmonsor's coming.

This she contrived to do several times; but

neither on those days, nor any other, for more than a week, did he appear, although the weather was fine.

She was extremely surprised and disturbed by his absence, but supposed it must be owing to indisposition, as she could not imagine any other cause for it.

While she was in this state of painful anxiety, she received one morning a note from Harriet Hargrave, entreating her to come and help Louisa and her to support the company of two of Miss Hargrave's friends, who were to spend the day at Oak Hill.

Constantia was very unwilling to go from home, though she felt much anxiety to know if Harriet, who was often at Ramsgate, could give her any intelligence of Valmonson; and uncertain, therefore, what to do, she answered the note by saying, that she could not promise to come, but would perhaps be with them at dinner, or soon after it.

Although the weather was very indifferent,

the fear of missing him determined her, if she went to Oak Hill at all, not to go till near four o'clock.

The morning passed without his appearing; and, at two o'clock, Harriet came to urge her request more earnestly than she had done in her note.

Constantia was now more averse to going than before, as it would oblige her to leave Ornville much sooner than she wished, and she begged Harriet to excuse her.

"I cannot indeed, my dear," she replied; "since you have no engagement, I must entreat you will go with me; your presence will rouse a little animation in Louisa, and enable me to take a share in the conversation of our guests with some satisfaction."

"I am too stupid to-day," said Constantia, "to give animation to any creature, and I wish that you would not insist on my going."

"I certainly must," rejoined Harriet, "if

stupidity is your greatest objection; for it will only render you more fit to bear with Mrs. Abbot and Miss Tassel. Yesterday morning they invited themselves to spend this day with us, in the absence of Mr. Abbot, and Prudence having been disappointed of several persons she asked to meet them, desired me to tell you, that she will be much obliged to you if you will come, that they may not find a mere family party."

"I am so dull," returned Constantia, "that I shall be worse than no body."

"Pardon me; however languid you may be, you will give spirit to us; besides, the party may possibly amuse you; for you will have an entertainment you are little acquainted with—women's conversation, when there are no gentlemen present. Mrs. Abbot and Miss Tassel are, doubtless, worse than many others, but still their conversation is in the true spirit of female chat."

Constantia still objected; but Harriet assured her that Prudence would think her re-

fusal very unkind, since she had no good apology to offer. "Do let me prevail upon you," she added, "Mrs. Oldfield I know is to dine here, so you can have no scruple about leaving your mother."

Constantia could no longer refuse, and was instantly hurried away.

On the road, she wished to make some inquiry about Valmonson, but had not courage to enter upon the subject; and, on arriving at Oak Hill, they found Mrs. Abbot and Miss Tafsel already there, who immediately put it out of her power to mention him.

"My dear Miss Orville," cried Mrs. Abbot, "how I rejoice to see you! I thought we were never to meet again."

"I have been dying to behold you!" exclaimed Miss Tafsel; "What have you contrived to do with yourself all this summer? there was no getting a sight of you at any public place."

"Miss Ornvile," said Mrs. Abbot, "is as great a recluse as her sister, without her apology; when she has as agreeable a husband as Sir Robert, we may excuse her living at home."

MISS TASSEL. "What a charming new coach Sir Robert has got! I saw him and Lady Horndon in it the other day, and I declare she looked quite enviable: she is a very fortunate woman."

MISS HARGRAVE. "Do you think Sir Robert's coach handsomer than Mr. Bafset's?"

MISS TASSEL. "Have you seen Colonel Crimson's?—'tis quite elegant."

MISS HARGRAVE. "'Tis not so handsome as Lady Manor's, which is a pale yellow; the lining and hammer-cloth light blue, with three rows of very deep fringe, and three rows of lace: 'tis made on an entire new plan."

MRS. ABBOT. "Lady Blazon's is the most splendid I have seen; but every thing of her's is in a superb stile."

MISS TASSEL. "Do you know, Miss Ornville, she has taken a prodigious dislike to your friend, Mrs. Almorne, from hearing that she never made a friend of any one who was fond of show. But I can't think Mrs. Almorne could say so."

HARRIET. "Mrs. Almorne is too prudent to say so in public; but, unluckily, she was overheard observing to a friend, in confidence, that the women who were eager to display the riches of their purse by the splendour of their dress, were not aware that it betrayed the poverty of their head and heart."

MISS TASSEL. "Well, I protest, if any body but Mrs. Almorne had said so, I should have thought it ill nature.—How charmingly Lady Manor dresses; she has the prettiest taste imaginable."

MRS. ABBOT. "Would you believe, ladies, that Mr. Abbot thinks no body dresses with such elegant simplicity as Mrs. Morville?—She is clothed, indeed, but never dressed."

LOUISA. "Do you see her often, Madam?"

MRS. ABBOT. "Sometimes I do see her; one must meet occasionally with so near a neighbour; but I know so little about her, that I am not fond of cultivating her acquaintance."

MISS TASSEL. "She can be of no family, or we should have heard her name long ago."

MRS. ABBOT. "She is certainly no body. She was with me the other day, when Lady Manor called, and you can't imagine how awkward I felt, in having such a person with me."

LOUISA. "I dare say Lady Manor was struck with her appearance and manner."

MRS. ABBOT. "Yes; she noticed her, and asked who she was, after Mrs. Morville had very discreetly withdrawn. I told her Ladyship she was the wife of a Mr. Morville, who had lately come into the possession of a small estate in the neighbourhood, and she said, that she had heard some one mention such a person."

CONSTANTIA. "Mrs. Almorne, who often visits Mrs. Morville, says she is a most amiable woman."

MISS TASSEL. "I am surprised Mrs. Almorne should visit her; for she is a great way from Delvin Lodge."

CONSTANTIA. "She is; but her being a stranger gave her a sufficient claim to Mrs. Almorne's attention."

MISS TASSEL. "I can't think it a sufficient claim. I should never think of visiting any one, unless they were of *some* consequence."

HARRIET. "Mrs. Almorne is so unfashionable as to visit from a spirit of benevolence; nay, so odd, as to do it from a spirit of contradiction. She was anxious to wait upon Mrs. Morville, because she suspected that few other people would."

MRS. ABBOT. "Really Mr. and Mrs. Morville can't expect to be visited; for they cannot afford to entertain company properly."

MISS HARGRAVE. "There is a much greater objection to their being visited; 'tis suspected that he is a democrat."

MRS. ABBOT. "Ah! shocking!"

MISS TASSEL. "Frightful! I shall not endure the sight of him."

MISS HARGRAVE. "I was surprised to hear he was a democrat; for he appeared to me a very agreeable inoffensive man."

"MRS. ABBOT. "Ah! democrats know how to deceive; but 'tis well their plots are discovered: the Abbé Barruel has shown how the democrats of Germany, in concert with the democrats of other countries, had conspired to *degenerate* the World."

MISS TASSEL. "I can't imagine what the democrats could intend to do with the world, if there was an end of all religion, morality, and good government."

MISS HARGRAVE. "Is it not wonderful

there should be so many clever people democrats!"

MISS TASSEL. " I should like to know exactly what democracy is ; for, though I hate it, I do not well understand it."

The conversation was interrupted by dinner being announced.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AFTER dinner, when the ladies returned to the drawing-room, Constantia took a seat next Harriet, and ventured to ask, if she had seen Valmonsor in any of her late excursions to Ramsgate?

"I saw him yesterday," replied Harriet, "when he inquired after my friends at Orville. I shall probably see him again in a day or two; have you any commands for him?"

This answer took from Constantia all desire to inquire farther; to hear of his being well, and with Harriet, were the two things she least wished to hear. She answered hastily, that she had no commands for him; and, turning quickly away to conceal her

her emotion, abruptly asked Mrs. Abbot, if she had been lately at Delvin Lodge?

Upon Mrs. Abbot's saying a few words in reply, Miss Tassel exclaimed, "Mrs. Almorne is certainly a good woman; yet, I know not why, I never could be quite easy with her."

MISS HARGRAVE. "She is undoubtedly an excellent character; but one cannot be easy with a person so different from one's self."

MRS. ABBOT. "She is, to be sure, a little particular; she is different from most of her sex, and women should be like one another:—they have all the same part to act."

MISS TASSEL. "I dare say Mrs. Almorne suffers for her singularity; there is not a woman in a hundred fit to converse with her; and what a melancholy thing it is to have few people to talk to!"

HARRIET. "Melancholy indeed, it would be for Mrs. Almorne to be confined to the society of women; but she has men to converse with."

MISS HARGRAVE. "Men, Harriet!—Did you ever see a man who liked a learned woman?"

MRS. ABBOT. "Mr. Abbot says that women should only learn how to manage their household affairs."

MISS TASSEL. "Nay, they must first learn how to get houses to manage; and I am sure that will never be by reading. How nicely has Miss Poplar contrived to get into one of the best houses in the county!"

MRS. ABBOT. "There was address! But pray how has Miss Bland inveigled my Lord Turfer into matrimony?"

MISS HARGRAVE. "'Tis said her brothers contrived to get the marriage made when my Lord was tipsy."

MISS TASSEL. "And a scandalous thing it was, for she is a great deal older than he; my Lord is twenty-one, and she is at least thirty."

MRS. ABBOT. "She is not less than thirty,

I am certain ; for on her eldest brother's marriage, I well remember, it was said, that she was several year's older than his wife, and Mrs. Bland is now exactly twenty-eight."

MISS TASSEL. " 'Tis easy to see by Miss Bland's face that she is not young."

LOUISA. " Miss Bland has a pale complexion ; but she does not appear to me to be more than twenty-two or three."

MISS HARGRAVE. " You are mistaken, Louisa ; Miss Bland must be at least twenty-seven or eight, for several years ago, she had all the gravity of thirty."

MRS. ABBOTT. " She is turned of thirty, if she is an hour."

MISS TASSEL. " Yes, yes, she is turned of thirty, for her friends say she is much less ; and friends always call a woman younger than she is."

HARRIET. " I have waited quietly, ladies, to see how you would settle the matter, before

I would tell you Miss Bland's age. There was a bet depending on it lately, in consequence of which the register was looked into, and she was found to be exactly twenty-four. My Lord is the same age."

MRS. ABBOT. "Well, I never should have thought it!"

MISS TASSEL. "I am sure she looks old enough."

MISS HARGRAVE. "Have you heard Miss Tassel, of Lord Tinkleworth's marriage to Miss Dollar?"

MISS TASSEL. "O, yes; what a strange marriage for a young woman of fortune!"

HARRIET. "It is a very proper fashionable marriage; the lady marries for high rank, and his Lordship for wealth."

MISS TASSEL. "It must be a delightful thing at her age to have grown up sons and daughters."

HARRIET. "The only circumstance to

be regretted in such a marriage is, that the gentleman has little chance of suffering from it so severely as the lady may do, if a young agreeable man comes in her way."

MRS. ABBOT. "She may find other causes of repentance, for Mr. Abbot says, my Lord is composed of materials to break the heart of any woman."

HARRIET. "There she will be safe; for when a young woman of independent fortune makes so unsuitable a match, it may be fairly presumed that she has no heart."

MISS HARGRAVE. "It is strange, however, that women will not, for their own advantage, inquire into men's domestic conduct before they marry. Lord Tinkleworth's severe treatment of his eldest son, and still more cruel behaviour to his daughter in law, was shocking! When she was in deep affliction for the sudden death of her husband, he had the extraordinary barbarity, although she had never given him offence, to insist upon taking her *infant* children from her!"

CONSTANTIA. "Complete cruelty!"

MISS TASSEL. "Colonel Crimson is to be married next week to Miss Coaxly."

MRS. ABBOT. "It is said he was engaged to her friend Miss Vowel."

MISS TASSEL. "Ay, but Miss Coaxly knew how to wheedle him from her. Miss Vowel is one of your reading ladies, who does not know how to play her cards. Women will always find the arts of coquetry more useful than books."

HARRIET. "You would then allow them the whole circle of the *arts*, but not of the sciences?"

MISS TASSEL. "Pray, Miss Harriet, have you seen the new novel called the Fireside?"

HARRIET. "The reviewers say they cannot recommend it to the perusal of their fair readers, as it possesses what so many of them are at the utmost pains to escape from, all the dullness of Home."

MISS TASSEL. "I wonder how an author can expect a dull story to be read. Novels do very well as an amusement, but otherwise they are good for nothing."

MRS. ABBOT. "I know not what Mr. Abbot would do without them. When he is dull in an evening, he says they prevent his feeling the want of a companion. Whenever I see him take a yawning fit, I always pop a novel into his hand."

HARRIET. "I fancy there are few families that are not obliged to them in one way or other; they are the most popular amusement in England."

MISS HARGRAVE. "It is to be regretted they are so, since they are generally poor stuff, that fills young women's heads with love and nonsense, which they are, of themselves, too apt to think of."

LOUISA. "Some novels have lately appeared on an improved plan. Dr. Moore's Edward is almost brought to a conclusion before the hero commences lover. Whoever knows the idle way in which many young military men pass their time in country towns, will wish that circulating libraries, of which they are a support, could afford them many

novels such as *Edward*; though it is much to be regretted, that in so moral a work, and in which the author discovers a vein of inimitable humour, he should often descend to a coarseness that is very offensive."

MISS HARGRAVE. " *Edward* may be better than others; but many people despise novels too much, to think them a proper vehicle of instruction."

HARRIET. " But if the rage for them cannot be destroyed, they should be made a vehicle of instruction. I confess I think the persons who despise good novels, are guided in their opinion, more by their own particular taste, than by reason. Considering them merely as an amusement, they have as just a claim to approbation, as many amusements of which all the world approve; and if, in any instance, they can be found to conduce to moral improvement, they have a high claim to praise."

CONSTANTIA. " I should suspect the indiscriminate contemners of novels, are apt to

confound the species of composition with the abuse of it."

HARRIET. "And I suspect that many of them, who have not taste to relish its excellencies, censure it as a cheap way of acquiring reputation for superior judgment."

LOUISA. "The degree of estimation in which novels should be held, has been so much the subject of dispute, that I shall not pretend to determine their claim to approbation ; but I can aver, that some of the strongest and most virtuous impressions I ever received, were from novels."

HARRIET. "And I acknowledge that some of the most dangerous ever made upon me, were from the same source."

CONSTANTIA. "This sufficiently evinces their importance ; and I own I should scarcely think it possible for any young woman to read Clarissa Harlow, without being impressed with the love of virtue."

HARRIET. "Or to read Tom Jones, without having her virtue contaminated."

CONSTANTIA. "My father thinks, that, either for man or woman, Tom Jones is one of the most pernicious books that ever was published."

MRS. ABBOT. "What do you think of Rousseau's Eloise, Miss Ornville? Is not she an edifying example of virtue?"

CONSTANTIA. "I never read it, Madam, being desired by Mrs. Almorne not to open it."

HARRIET. "I read it lately; and am clear the virtue it exhibits, cannot counteract the poison it contains. But I hardly admire it in any respect. The great merit of Julia, is intended to lie in her conduct to St. Preux, after she was married, when he resided in her house; yet she declares her love for him was then over. If it was, where was her extraordinary virtue? If it was not, what are we to think of her veracity?—But it may be said

she deceived herself. Could she do so, and feel strongly?—The mistakes of Julia at eighteen, may be understood; at twenty-eight they are unintelligible. Had Mrs. Wolmar's conduct to St. Preux been accompanied with the full consciousness of her affection for him, it would, indeed, have been exemplary."

LOUISA. " Yet, even then, I should have wished her to betray more grief and tenderness in private."

MRS. ABBOT. " Many people think the conduct of Julia very beautiful."

HARRIET. " I can think nothing beautiful, which is not natural. I view Julia just as I should do the portrait of a woman, whose eyes were placed in her forehead; in vain would the painter tell me the features were finely drawn,—they might be so, but their effect would be lost upon me."

MRS. ABBOT. " May there not be some defect in your eyes, Miss Harriet?"

LOUISA. " The same defect is in mine, for I am entirely of Harriet's opinion. Although I often pity Julia, it is seldom that her

conduct does not either disappoint, or offend me.

If her father had merely required the sacrifice of her own happiness to his will, she ought perhaps, to have yielded to him, although it would have been going far for such a father; but to doom St. Preux to misery, to break her solemn vows to him,—and to sacrifice her person, are acts, which are at once shocking, and unpardonable!

HARRIET. “ We hear some men condemn the legal prostitution, of which women are guilty, who marry without affection, although they have every other inducement ;—in the circumstances of Julia, how very shocking is the prostitution ! ”

LOUISA. “ Yet for whom does she make such sacrifices ? For a father, who, after being all his life a bad husband, disposes of his daughter as a bale of goods for his own satisfaction. Yet this very father she always dignifies with the title of the best of fathers ! ”

HARRIET. “ Her husband too, she reverences, although he is another selfish being, who marries her without regret or hesitation,

though he knows the misery it occasions her. Is it possible to sympathise in her feelings for either?

LOUISA. "But, if she really believed the man her father had chosen for her husband, worthy of respect, how are we to excuse her marrying without informing him of her situation with St. Preux ?

The first errors of her life we may forgive, as they were intended by the author to make the conduct of Mrs. Wolmar more exemplary ; but how can we pardon him for making her deficient in modesty ? There are sentences in her letters, both before and after marriage, which ought never to have come from her pen.

He is likewise blamable in making her general conduct deficient in tenderness to St. Preux. Both Julia and Clara, are often most unnecessarily harsh in their language to him. Rousseau understood the tenderness of passion, but not the softness of humanity.

With Clara, I am still less pleased than with Julia. At eighteen she is respectable : but at twenty-eight, she is, before the death of her friend, a disagreeable romp ; and after it, a violent, petulant, troublesome child."

MRS. ABBOT. "Is there no part of the work you admire, Miss Louisa?"

LOUISA. "The pathetic tenderness of St. Preux, I think inimitable. Two or three of his letters, with the exception of a few passages, are chef-d'oeuvres,—but on the first perusal of them, their effect was in some measure lost upon me, from the dissatisfaction excited by the other parts of the work. I never read a book I was so often tempted to lay down from weariness, or throw aside from disgust."

HARRIET. "It would be endless to enumerate its faults; and its celebrity appears to me only a striking proof of the power of eloquence, when employed on the passions.—Nobody but Rousseau could have contrived such a combination of incongruities; it is a tissue of absurdities, which should be committed to the flames, for the sake of young women, and common sense."

MRS. ABBOT. "What do you think of Clarissa Harlowe, ladies? She has been compared with Julia."

LOUISA. "Clarissa I think uniformly charming. Her errors, which are chiefly errors of judgment at nineteen, are only such as are necessary to prevent our thinking the character too perfect for human nature. Her virtue is equal to all her trials ; yet no unnatural, or incredible tranquillity, is seen in her conduct.—The whole novel appears to me a master-piece. The characters are so admirably drawn, that, while I read their letters, I almost fancy myself the person who writes ; and so powerfully are the passions interested, that even after the death of the heroine, attention is kept awake during a whole volume, with undiminished force."

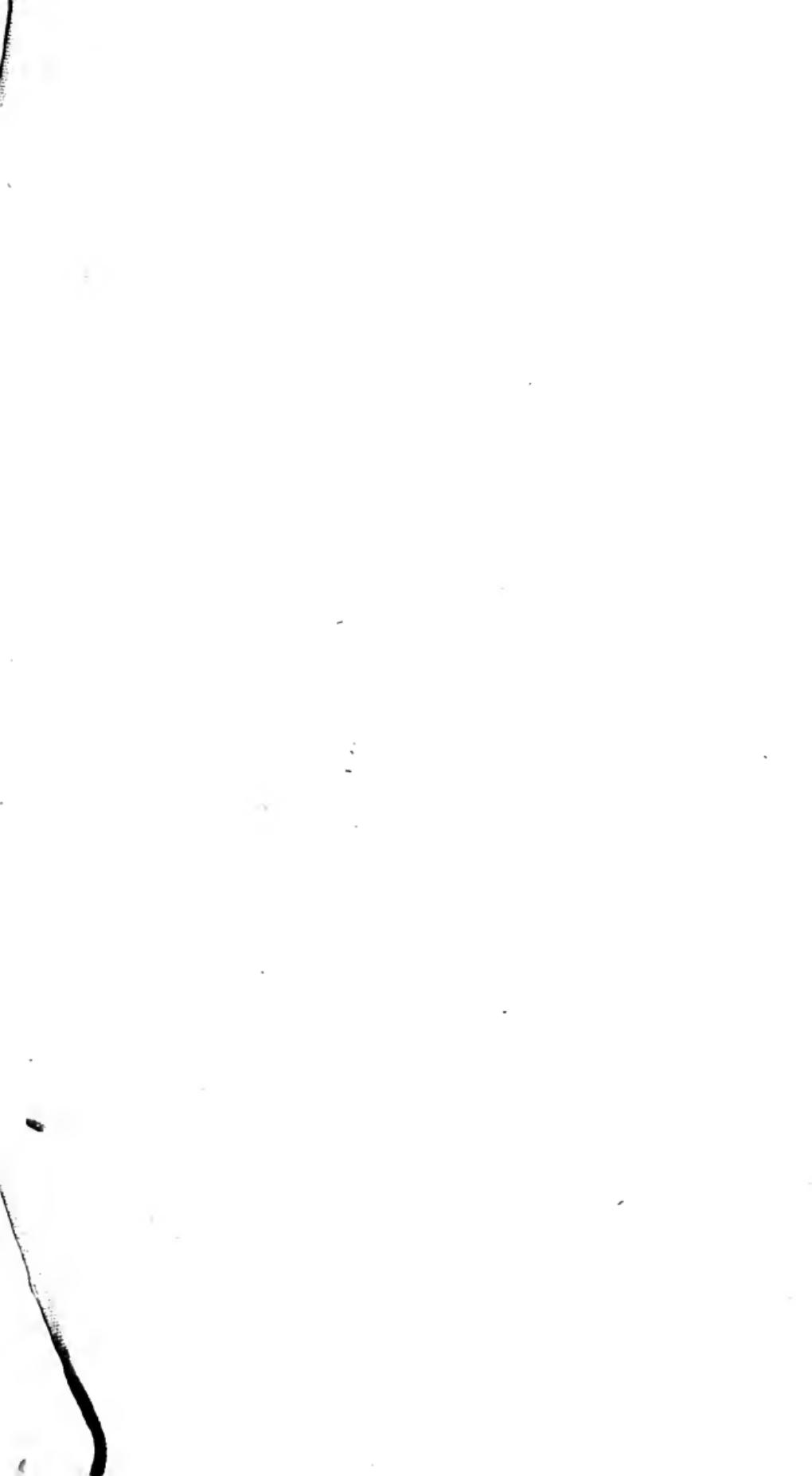
CONSTANTIA. "Clarissa is, unfortunately, too tedious and melancholy to be generally read ; but it is one of the works which lead me to be surprised, that novels should ever be thought a contemptible species of composition. I should have expected them to please, as far as the sympathies of mankind could be interested, by representations of life. If the novel has not the beauty of poetry, the skill of actors, and ornaments of the stage to give

it effect ; it is superior to the drama, by comprehending a wider range of events, and by being free from many of the disadvantages, to which theatrical representations are exposed ”

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